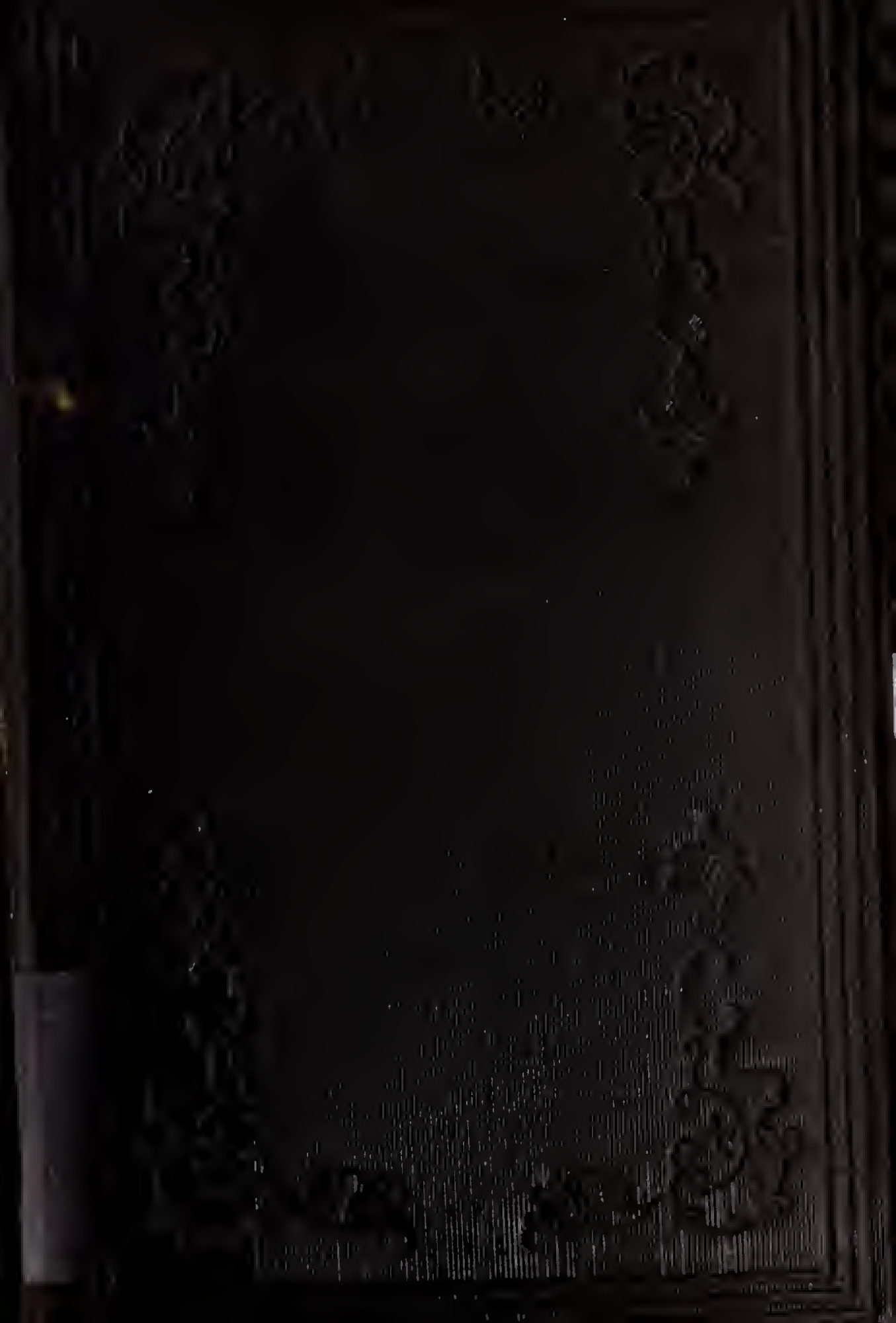


Library of Theological
Seminary Princeton.

LIBRARY
OF THE
Theological Seminary,
PRINCETON, N. J.

BX 5037 .B5 1855 v.7
Bickersteth, Edward, 1786-1850.
The works of the Rev. Edward Bickersteth

# THE WORKS

OF

# THE REV. EDWARD BICKERSTETH,

RECTOR OF WATTON, HERTS.

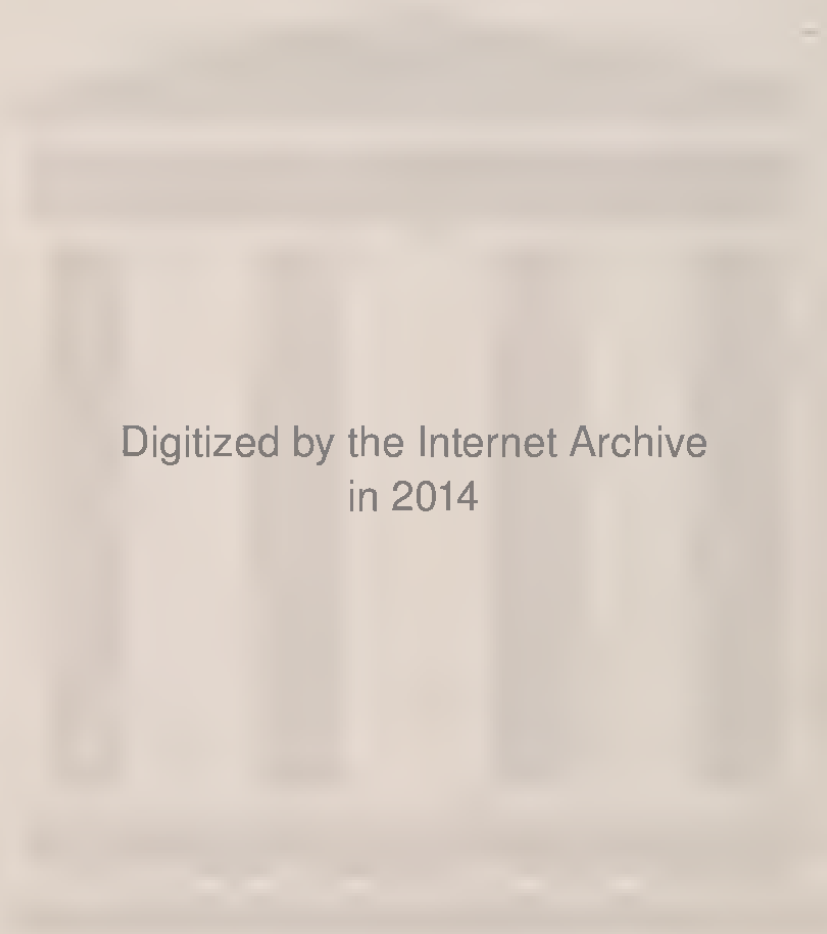
---

VOL. VII.

THE CHIEF CONCERNS OF MAN.

---

NEW YORK:
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,
285 BROADWAY.
1855.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2014

https://archive.org/details/worksofrevedward07bick

# PREFACE.

THE first eighteen Discourses of this Volume formed a course of Valedictory Sermons, preached at Wheler Chapel in the autumn of 1830. The notes from which they were preached were prepared amidst all the pressure of engagements connected with the relinquishment of an arduous scene of labour, and they were written out, and sent to the press amidst the many calls of a new situation, and the entire charge of a Country Parish.

The Author could not refuse the earnest desire of those who heard them, for their publication: and his hope respecting them is, that they may be useful to a beloved congregation, among whom the Author laboured for many years; and possibly to others who are desiring plain scriptural truths on common but most important subjects.

The Author in the third edition (to make the course of subjects more complete) added some Sermons which he had recently preached on "the Love of God, and the patient waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ." His mind had not been so fully directed to the importance and seasonableness of the doctrine of our Lord's Second Advent, at the time

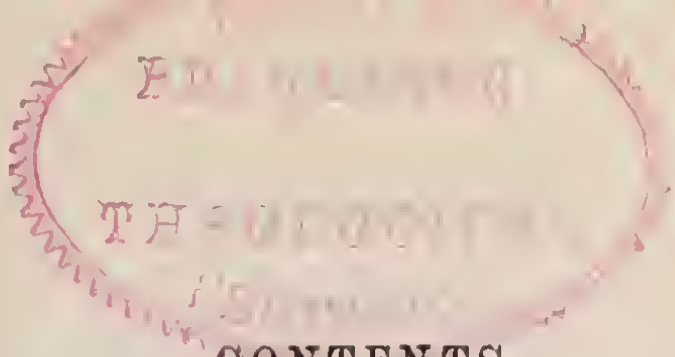
that the work was first published, as it has been since: and he felt that the precious doctrines of the Love of God, and the duty of Waiting for the Coming of Christ, called for distinct consideration among "the Chief Concerns of Man," and were needful to the fulness of the scriptural statement in connection with the various other truths here brought forward.

In the present edition the author has added his Sermons on "Preparedness for the Day of Christ," and a Sermon preached before the General Society for promoting District Visiting, as they are so immediately connected with the subjects of this volume.

They also continue to be printed separately.

E. BICKERSTETH.

*Watton Rectory,*
*Sept.* 1, 1841.



# CONTENTS.


## SERMONS I, II.

THE DAY OF GRACE.

WE THEN, AS WORKERS TOGETHER WITH HIM, BESEECH YOU ALSO THAT YE RECEIVE NOT THE GRACE OF GOD IN VAIN; FOR HE SAITH, I HAVE HEARD THEE IN A TIME ACCEPTED, AND IN THE DAY OF SALVATION HAVE I SUCCOURED THEE: BEHOLD, NOW IS THE ACCEPTED TIME; BEHOLD, NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION.—2 COR. VI. 1, 2..... *page* 1, 12.

## SERMONS III, IV.

ON DEATH.

THEN SHALL THE DUST RETURN TO THE EARTH AS IT WAS, AND THE SPIRIT SHALL RETURN UNTO GOD WHO GAVE IT—ECCLES. XII. 7..... *page* 24, 32.

## SERMONS V, VI.

THE RESURRECTION.

THE HOUR IS COMING IN THE WHICH ALL THAT ARE IN THE GRAVES SHALL HEAR HIS VOICE, AND SHALL COME FORTH; THEY THAT HAVE DONE GOOD, UNTO THE RESURRECTION OF LIFE, AND THEY THAT HAVE DONE EVIL, UNTO THE RESURRECTION OF DAMNATION—JOHN V. 28, 29.... *page* 40, 50.

## SERMONS VII, VIII.

### THE JUDGMENT-DAY.

AND I SAW A GREAT WHITE THRONE, AND HIM THAT SAT ON IT, FROM WHOSE FACE THE EARTH AND THE HEAVEN FLED AWAY: AND THERE WAS FOUND NO PLACE FOR THEM. AND I SAW THE DEAD, SMALL AND GREAT, STAND BEFORE GOD; AND THE BOOKS WERE OPENED: AND ANOTHER BOOK WAS OPENED, WHICH IS THE BOOK OF LIFE: AND THE DEAD WERE JUDGED OUT OF THOSE THINGS WHICH WERE WRITTEN IN THE BOOKS, ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS. AND THE SEA GAVE UP THE DEAD WHICH WERE IN IT: AND DEATH AND HELL DELIVERED UP THE DEAD WHICH WERE IN THEM: AND THEY WERE JUDGED EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS.—REV. XX. 11—13..... *page* 59, 68.

## SERMONS IX, X.

### ETERNITY.

WE LOOK NOT AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE SEEN, BUT AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN; FOR THE THINGS WHICH ARE SEEN ARE TEMPORAL, BUT THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN ARE ETERNAL.—2 COR. IV. 18..... *page* 79, 88

## SERMONS XI, XII.

### HELL.

THEN SHALL HE SAY UNTO THEM ON THE LEFT HAND, DEPART FROM ME, YE CURSED, INTO EVERLASTING FIRE, PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS.—MATT. XXV. 41. *page* 97, 109.

## SERMONS XIII, XIV.

### HEAVEN.

AND THERE SHALL BE NO MORE CURSE: BUT THE THRONE OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB SHALL BE IN IT: AND HIS SERVANTS SHALL SERVE HIM; AND THEY SHALL SEE HIS FACE; AND HIS NAME SHALL BE IN THEIR FOREHEADS. AND THERE SHALL BE NO NIGHT THERE; AND THEY NEED NO CANDLE, NEITHER LIGHT OF THE SUN; FOR THE LORD GOD GIVETH THEM LIGHT: AND THEY SHALL REIGN FOR EVER AND EVER. —REV. XXII. 3—5..... *page* 119, 130.

## SERMONS XV, XVI.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S TRIUMPH.

THANKS BE TO GOD WHICH GIVETH US THE VICTORY, THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. THEREFORE MY BELOVED BRETHREN, BE YE STEDFAST, UNMOVEABLE, ALWAYS ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD; FORASMUCH AS YE KNOW THAT YOUR LABOUR IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD.—1 COR. XV. 57, 58..... *page* 140, 151.

## SERMONS XVII, XVIII.

### FAREWELL SERMONS.

FINALLY, BRETHREN, FAREWELL. BE PERFECT, BE OF GOOD COMFORT, BE OF ONE MIND, LIVE IN PEACE, AND THE GOD OF LOVE AND PEACE SHALL BE WITH YOU.—2 COR. XIII. 11..... *page* 163, 174.

## SERMONS XIX, XX.

### THE LOVE OF GOD.

THE LORD DIRECT YOUR HEARTS INTO THE LOVE OF GOD.—2 THESS. III. 5..... *page* 186, 193.

SERMONS XXI, XXII.

WAITING FOR THE COMING OF CHRIST.

THE PATIENT WAITING FOR CHRIST.—2 THESS. III. 5.
*page* 202, 213.

## Preparedness for the Day of Christ.

SERMONS I, II.

PUTTING ON THE ARMOUR OF LIGHT.

NOW IT IS HIGH TIME TO AWAKE OUT OF SLEEP; FOR NOW IS OUR SALVATION NEARER THAN WHEN WE BELIEVED. THE NIGHT IS FAR SPENT, THE DAY IS AT HAND; LET US THEREFORE CAST OFF THE WORKS OF DARKNESS, AND LET US PUT ON THE ARMOUR OF LIGHT.—ROM. XIII. 11, 12.
*page* 232, 246.

SERMONS III, IV.

PREPARATIONS FOR OUR LORD'S COMING.

BEHOLD, I COME AS A THIEF; BLESSED IS HE THAT WATCHETH, AND KEEPETH HIS GARMENTS, LEST HE WALK NAKED, AND THEY SEE HIS SHAME.—REV. XVI. 15.. *page* 260, 274.

ON CARE OF THE SOULS OF OTHERS.

THEN THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE, BEING ANGRY, SAID TO HIS SERVANTS, GO OUT QUICKLY INTO THE STREETS AND LANES OF THE CITY, AND BRING IN HITHER THE POOR, AND THE MAIMED, AND THE HALT, AND THE BLIND.—LUKE XIV. 21.
*page* 291.

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

# THE CHIEF CONCERNS,

*&c.*

## SERMON I.

### THE DAY OF GRACE.

2 CORINTHIANS VI. 1, 2.

*We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee; behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

ANXIOUSLY considering to what subjects I might most profitably direct your attention, it has appeared to me that I could not occupy you minds more advantageously than by bringing before you those all-important topics,—the Day of Grace, Death, the Resurrection, Judgment, Eternity, Hell and Heaven; which fix our state for ever, and finally closing earthly relations, in their immense magnitude swallow up all inferior concerns:—topics confessedly of supreme importance, and calculated in their very nature to engage our most wakeful attention, and bearing most directly upon every man's liveliest hopes and fears.

In the review of these things, may we all be deeply affected with the awful truth, that on this momentary life

hangs an eternity pregnant with consequences of the most stupendous interest. This is the great principle brought before you in the text : "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain ; for he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee ; behold, now is the accepted time ! behold, now is the day of salvation."

The subject then of our present consideration is, THE DAY OF GRACE. The grace of God is now to be obtained, and the present day is the season for obtaining it. If we reject that grace, we perish for ever ; if we receive it, we are everlastingly saved.

We will consider,

1. THE GRACE OF GOD.
2. THE SEASON OF GRACE.
3. THE GIVING OF GRACE.
4. THE RECEIVING OF IT IN VAIN.
5. THE RECEIVING IT EFFECTUALLY.

## I. THE GRACE OF GOD.

The grace here meant is free unmerited favour to sinners, proceeding from the sole love of God our Father, and manifesting itself according to their varied wants and necessities.

We will notice, 1. The grace itself ; and, 2. The channel through which it flows.

1. THE GRACE ITSELF.

The Apostle had just given a full description of this grace. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation ; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us ; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be

made the righteousness of God in him." We have here a clear and full revelation of gospel grace; of God's good will to us; the good tidings of great joy to perishing sinners.

Man was created upright, but, being tempted by the devil, he rebelled against his Creator and Benefactor; and, if rich grace had not interposed, he would justly have perished for ever. But, O the riches of that unspeakable love, which in pity to fallen sinners, provided a remedy!

From the beginning to the end, the gospel unfolds a system of grace. The whole plan of salvation originated in the Divine purpose, before the world was made. "He hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. i. 9.) And as it originated in grace, so all the preliminary steps of it have been gratuitous. The promises to Adam on his fall, and to the patriarchs; the types and shadows in the Law of Moses; the exhibitions of it in the prophetic writings, until its full manifestation "in the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light," —not one step was advanced through man's wisdom or goodness: but all proceed from the overflowing fountain of Divine love. God is therefore altogether sovereign in the disposal of grace, saying "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." The blessings of this glorious "Gospel of the grace of God," are also equally free and gracious. Spiritual life and conversion to God are the first, that a sinner, dead in sin, requires. "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he hath loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved.") Ephes. ii. 4, 5.) Then he wants free and full forgiveness. This is also of grace; "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Ephes. i. 7.) To be accounted righteous, as well as for-

given, is furtber indispensable ; the same grace justifies ; "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Rom. i. 24.) "Holiness also, without which no man shall see the Lord," is absolutely requisite, as, without this, we should be miserable even in heaven itself. It is "the grace of God which bringeth salvation, that hath appeared to all men," (the salvation is provided for all men without exception, who will receive it,) "teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." (Titus ii. 11, 12.) Nor is there any thing pertaining to our present and everlasting good, (2 Peter i. 3.) which is not freely provided and made over to us in Christ Jesus. "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are your's, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.) And while it is made over to Christ for sinners, all those who receive this grace are themselves guarded and secured from ever losing it. The glorious inheritance above is "reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation."

Now then, my brethren, we proclaim these blessings, and, in the very language of the Divine record invite you to partake of them. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye, to the waters ; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price."

But do you say, I have forfeited every claim, by my many sins—Consider farther, then :

2. THE CHANNEL THROUGH WHICH IT FLOWS.

"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." There is a mediator for sinners. The treasury of grace is in Christ. All its fulness dwells in him, and is to be received from him. The gracious declaration of our text was originally made to the Head of the Church. "Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee, and I will

preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people." (Isaiah xlix. 8.)

The gift of Christ was the chief expression of the Father's love to man. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John iv. 9, 10.) And by that gift he encourages us most surely to expect every other. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32.)

And not only by the gift of Christ has he assured us of his love, our text leads us to remark that he has also made Christ himself an example and the model of his grace to man. The promise, "I have heard thee," was originally made to the Messiah. Whatever was done for the help of our Divine Head shall, in a subordinate sense, be done for his people, to carry them through all impediments, "till he bring forth judgment to victory." The promises made to him, in the first instance, belong, as far as they are needful for salvation, to all his disciples. The help which he received is a picture of the help which those who believe in him shall receive through him. Moreover, he is also the Dispenser of all God's grace to sinners. Absent from us, as to his personal presence, yet, though "ascended up on high, he has received gifts, yea, even for the rebellious; and as a Prince and Saviour, he sheds forth those gifts, according to the necessities of His Church and people. "The God of all grace hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus," (1 Peter v. 10,) and every blessing in the way thither is received through him.

Oh, with what confidence and assurance of success may you come to the throne of grace! One sits there, who loved his enemies; one sits there who lived and died for sinners, and "makes intercession for the transgressors, and is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." If you

ask why sinners receive blessings, and why God bears with the perverseness of his people, and still showers down his loving-kindnesses on them day by day? I reply, because he delights to gratify the sinner's Saviour—his own, his only, his beloved Son, in whom he is always well-pleased. It is not for your goodness, but because you are purchased by the blood of Jesus, and belong to him; therefore, does the Father heap mercies on the unworthy, even on all who come to him by Christ.

Here then, you see what a provision of grace there is in the gospel—How full and how complete! O that it may not be set before you in vain!—but that each heart may offer up the prayer, "Remember me, O Lord," with this favour; "Visit me," even me, "with thy salvation, O Lord." To animate and rouse you to fervour in the use of such petitions, consider,

## II. THE SEASON OF GRACE.

"He saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: Behold, now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation!"

In reference to this season of grace, observe, 1. The deplorable want of it; 2 The invaluable possession: and, 3. The attention which it demands.

### 1. The deplorable want of it.

There are those who have lost the divine grace, and all hope of recovering it.

The fallen angels once basked in the sunshine of Divine love and favour. Their first state was beautiful and glorious. By pride they fell. "They "kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation." (Jude 6.) No grace was manifested, as far as is revealed to us, planning their recovery; no season for their restoration. "For verily, he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." (Heb. ii. 16.) They seem rather to be monuments for ever of the extent of the divine power, the dreadfulness of his wrath, and severity of his justice. O the strictness of that justice, which left

those wicked spirits in all the misery of their fall ; no way of escape devised for them ! no appointed season of grace !

The lost souls in hell, once had a day of grace. On earth, like us they were probationers for heaven. They had life, and health, and strength. They had power of mind, and affections of heart, and the conscience of right and wrong. They knew that they were mortal, yet destined for immortality. The volume of nature was opened to all, and to many the volume of grace. But loving darkness rather than light, the precious seasons of grace were frittered away and finally lost for ever.

O methinks, could we to these lost souls proclaim another day of grace, another season of opportunity and escape, one more space of trial ; from every imprisoned spirit in hell, would break forth the earnest supplications, 'Oh, try us yet this once—once again, try us : we will no more slight the offered mercy, no more neglect the great salvation ; no more make an earthly world our home, no more be drunk with the riches and pleasures, the cares and business of a transitory state. Oh ! we shall think all the yoke of Christ easy, his burden light indeed ! Try us again, O try us yet this once.' But their time of shame is come, (Isaiah xxvi. 11.) and every rising expectation there, is crushed with—"Remember, thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things." Thou hast deliberately preferred the world and its good things to God and his favour, and now it is too late. "Thy harvest is past, thy summer is ended," never, never to return.

Even in this world, I must not conceal the awful truth, men may forfeit the advantage of a day of grace. Just as "Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected ; for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." (Heb. xii. 16, 17.) The sinner may harden his own heart, till God leaves him to his own hardness, withdrawing from him his Holy Spirit, giving him up to his own heart's lusts, and to walk in his own counsels. Psalm lxxxi. 12.

O sinner, harden not thine heart, lest this which is written come upon thee, lest conscience should lose all its sensibility, and thy day of grace be prematurely closed.

But in every case death approaches, and that dark night inevitably closes and terminates, to all, the day of grace.

2. THE INVALUABLE POSSESSION OF THE DAY OF GRACE.

The text presumes the present possession of the day of grace, when it says, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

It is the acceptable time—the time of good-will, or acceptance. There is a proclamation of pardon to rebels, and the day yet continues for accepting it—there is salvation *from* eternal ruin and *to* eternal glory, and to-day this salvation may be obtained.

To the Jews, the time of Christ's ministry was this day ; but they rejected him, and he wept over them, and said, "O that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes." (Luke xix. 42.) They let the day pass. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

When the Apostle wrote to the Corinthians, the day of grace was extended to the Gentile world ; multitudes embraced the gospel ; households, towns, cities, countries, and kingdoms, gradually professed Christianity. The Gospel was widely proclaimed ; there was a large outpouring of the Spirit, and all the glory of the primitive church.

But, brethren, I turn from others, to proclaim in your ears that there is *now* for you an accepted time, that the present is *now* for you a day of salvation. Observe the remarkable repetition of *now*. We have a similar repetition of the word, *To-day*, in Hebrews (iv. 7.) "He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, to-day, after so long a time, as it is said, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

The present time is the only season of which you are

sure. Now in this life is the only time you have; the present life is a short reprieve for sinful creatures, a respite from the execution of the sentence upon them, in which they may seek, and obtain deliverance from eternal death, and the blessing of everlasting life. St. Paul does not speak of the future; there is no future day of salvation: no trial after this. If ever you repent, it must be now; if ever you believe in Christ, it must be now; if ever you turn to God, it must be now: if ever you *work out your own salvation*, if ever you enter in at the straight gate, it must be now. "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him, lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily, I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." (Matt. v. 25, 26.) O my friends, there is no doing the work of salvation in another world. Heaven and hell have other employments: one to enjoy for ever the completed salvation, and the other for ever to bewail its loss. Now then, whatever may become of your reputation, of your estate, of your liberty, of your family, of your life itself, neglect not the one thing needful, your salvation?

Are you in youth—O my children, O my young friends, think not you are secure of a day, even of the present day; the Saviour says, "They that seek me early shall find me."

Are you in middle life, and have health and strength; give all to him who is worthy of all; health and strength are no protection against sickness and death; this may be to you also the only day of salvation.

Are you aged—the day of salvation still remains, it is rapidly departing: grasp hold of Christ ere it be gone for ever.

An affecting incident occurred in our own congregation, which may to our minds give a reality to all the things of which we have been speaking. A most regular attendant on my ministry, who never missed when he could help it,

was at Church on the Sunday, and on the Wednesday in his business ; but feeling unwell, he sent for a medical man, who seemed to think with proper care he might live for many years. He took his tea the same evening, and had hardly swallowed it, before he fell back dead. I see him as sitting on that seat before me, where he so regularly attended. He heard the sermons which you have heard ; he joined in the prayers in which you have joined ; and now he is gone to the reality of what we have so often spoken of—and soon you and I must follow. But his death tells us with a powerful voice, *Now is the day of salvation.*

3. THE ATTENTION WHICH IT DEMANDS.

*Behold ! Behold !*

It is twice repeated, because men neglect it so much—because it is so infinitely important to regard it.

There are many things which ask for our attention, that are not worthy of our thoughts ; there are other things valuable in their proportion ; but this is supremely and incalculably important. It is nothing less than escaping the greatest of all evils—an evil beyond our highest thoughts ruinous, and attaining the greatest possible good, a good beyond our highest thoughts advantageous. O if ever attention were needful, it is needful here ! "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

Behold it so then, as to turn your eyes from all other objects that would distract and hinder your attention to this your happy season of grace. Let the Saviour have to say of you as of Mary, "But one thing is needful : and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her."

Consider much this rich grace of God ; search the Scriptures, that you may see it in all its fulness. Believe firmly all that God says concerning it, and use heartily, and gladly, all its treasures for your soul's salvation. To enable you to act thus, you have a blessed Teacher and

Comforter, John xiv. 26. Ask for his grace and you shall receive it.

Have any hitherto neglected this great salvation ? Let me exhort them, with all possible earnestness and affection, to neglect it no longer. Now you have life, the word of God, sabbaths, sermons, ministers, pious friends, the means of grace, every possible help. You have time to seek God : he is waiting to be gracious, it is a golden opportunity, all things are ready. Never, never will you have a better time, a fitter time, or one more favourable than now, and possibly you may have no other, never again may the same invitation reach your ears : never again the Spirit soften your heart. O then, "to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts ! " Oh ! to-day receive the grace of God !

But have any known the accepted time ; and, God working in them, are they "working out their own salvation with fear and trembling ? "—Press onward, beloved brethren, for the prize : "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." You may have to go through many trials : but all are ordered and regulated for your best good, and whatever sorrows or difficulties may be in the midst of them, God will hear and succour and deliver you. You shall find the faithfulness of the declaration.—"I have heard thee, and I have succoured thee." He will keep you so that "none shall pluck you out of his hands."

## SERMON II.

### THE DAY OF GRACE.

2 CORINTHIANS VI. 1, 2.

*We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain ; for he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee. Behold, now is the accepted time ; Behold, now is the day of salvation.*

FROM these words I stated my purpose to consider, 1. The grace of God. 2. The season of grace. 3. The giving of grace. 4. The receiving it in vain. 5. The receiving it effectually. We have already considered the first two divisions.

There remain to consider,

3. THE GIVING OF GRACE.
4. THE RECEIVING OF GRACE IN VAIN.
5. THE RECEIVING THIS GRACE EFFECTUALLY.

### III. THE GIVING OF GRACE.

"We then, as workers together with him."

We have here the instrument used, and the power using it.

THE INSTRUMENT USED—is the ministry of the Gospel. God uses, in infinite condescension, sinful men to be the heralds of his grace, and to convey to their fellow-sinners

the tidings of his love. "We are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." This is our proper business, this our high office as God's ministers. In this accepted time we study in hope, we pray in hope, we preach in hope, we labour in hope, if that God by any means, through us, may save your souls. Nor have we any thing that ought so to lie upon our minds as this. How the Apostle speaks to the Galatians, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth until Christ be formed in you." We know that the time or opportunity is limited and short: we urge upon your attention the only way of salvation; we remind you that the continuance of the day of grace is full of uncertainties: we declare the aggravated guilt of neglecting it, and that, if the Gospel be not "a savour of life unto life," it is "a savour of death unto death;" we desire "to be instant in season and out of season," never resting till we see you safe in the only refuge of sinners,—the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

We remember also that a day will come when we can no more think of you, and pray for you, visit you, and beseech you to turn to Christ: a day when ministers will be withdrawn from you for ever, and if you have received the grace of God in vain, Satan may give your minister a challenge, which he can then neither accept nor answer, —'Do what thou wilt to rescue this or that lost sinner from my grasp; to bring him to repentance and salvation; he is mine, for ever chained in indissoluble bonds, my prey, my lawful captive—to share my torments in the lake of fire, even for ever.'

Let the voice of the ministry now then reach your ears: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found."

And for your encouragement, remember

THE POWER USING THE INSTRUMENT.

Do not think we magnify the instrument. The treasure is unspeakably excellent and precious, but "we have this treasure in earthern vessels,"—vessels of no value in themselves, full of defects and weaknesses, soon broken and

laid aside—and why is this? "that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." (2 Cor. iv. 7.)

A divine power attends the feeble ministry of man. To them that are saved "the preaching of the cross is the wisdom of God and the power of God." Preaching is the Divine Ordiuance in which God is wont to pour out his Holy Spirit. Oh! if you had right views of this ordinance, how highly would you esteem—how diligently attend, the ministry of the gospel, looking for and expecting the Holy Ghost. This, this is our aim—*not* that our preaching may be "with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that as *our sufficiency is of God*, so that sufficiency may be continually seen in turning you from sin, and building you up in your most holy faith. It is his promise, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power;" O that the power may be put forth in even our ministry to the conversion and salvation of your precious souls.

THE MEASURE GIVEN, is just as it pleases God; to some more, to some less: "To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." Just as the gifts of the Spirit are bestowed on each according to the Divine sovereignty, and "all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will;" so the graces of the Spirit are according to the gift, freely given of God—"ask and ye shall have." Be not content with a small measure of grace. O how little, how very little most of us have, and how satisfied we are with that little! Instead of hungering and thirsting for more and more, that grace and peace may be multiplied, we sit down contented with the truth of grace, when we ought to long for the riches and fuluess of grace. Let us apply to him who "giveth liberally and upbraideth not." Our having any grace is questionable, when we are not thirsting for more.

## IV. THE RECEIVING THIS GRACE IN VAIN.

The Apostle exhorts the Corinthians not to receive the

grace of God in vain. This implies that many hear of, yet never benefit by this grace.

Mark then, 1. The persons who receive this grace in vain; and 2. Their inexcusableness.

1. THE PERSONS WHO RECEIVE THIS GRACE IN VAIN.

There are various and very opposite classes, who, however they may differ in other respects, agree in this, they all receive the grace of God in vain. UNBELIEVERS prefer darkness to light, "because their deeds are evil." Thus the Jews at Antioch, when they saw the Gentiles crowding to hear the word, "were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." (Acts xiii. 45.) So again in Iconium, "the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren." (Acts xiv. 2.) The Apostle says, "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." (1 Cor. i. 23.) The root of this unbelief is the love of sin, and it is the love of sin therefore which you must especially watch and pray against. "O take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." (Heb. iii. 12.)

SELF-RIGHTEOUS PERSONS think so well of themselves, that they do not see their need of this grace; it may be very proper and suitable they suppose for the wicked, but their goodness will help them, and so they reject the grace that brings salvation—*Going about*,—the most impracticable of all attempts that sinful men ever made,—"to establish their own righteousness, they submit not themselves to the righteousness of God."

CARELESS PERSONS also receive the grace of God in vain. They are like the way-side hearer; the truth comes before them, but it sinks not into the heart: and, like Gallio, they "care for none of these things;" if their temporal interests were affected, they would be all alive; but as it only concerns the soul, they are inattentive, and indifferent, and unconcerned. There are others who may be

called TEMPORARY BELIEVERS : in them the seed of the word is sown as on a rock : for a while they believe, but in time of temptation they fall away. There may be great joy and excitement for a season, but it is soon lost, and they become less impressible than ever. WORLDLY MEN in general receive the grace of God in vain ; "the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. There are others who are great TALKERS IN RELIGION, they can speak most fluently on religious subjects, speculate about them, dispute for them, and admire them ; *they say, but do not ;* these also receive the grace of God in vain. There are some even WHO PREVENT THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE, and make it an occasion of sin ; and "turn the grace of God into licentiousness."

O my brethren, I cannot but fear that there are now before me persons who, under one or other of these descriptions are trifling with, or trampling upon the grace of God. Search and try your ways : pray earnestly to God in the words of David, "Examine and prove me, O Lord, look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." For consider,

2. THE INEXCUSABLENESS OF THOSE WHO REJECT THIS GRACE.

It is a case of most fearful guilt and danger. Every moment's delay increases the danger, as it shortens the time between them and ruin. If they are spared year after year, through the intercession of the Lord Jesus, yet while they cumber the ground, the last year will soon come, and with it an accumulated load of guilt. Solomon thus describes their state : "Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof ; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh : when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when destruction and anguish cometh upon you ; Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ;

they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." (Prov. i. 24—28.) Here too is an alarming aggravation of their misery ; they had a day of grace, the proclamation of mercy sounded in their ears ; but they rejected all till there was no remedy. Our Lord assures us that "it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment," than for those who had heard and disregarded his gospel. They shall be left *without excuse*, and as the man who had not on the wedding-garment was *speechless*, so shall they be without one plea, when they are bound hand and foot, and "cast into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Despise not, then, the riches of the goodness and loving-kindness of God : wait on him with all earnestness for a part and share in his salvation, and rest not till this great concern be secure.

Do you ask how you may receive the grace of God effectually, and what is the character of those who do so? we proceed to consider,

## V. THE RECEIVING OF THIS GRACE EFFECTUALLY.

The Apostle beseeches them not to receive the grace of God in vain, that is, to receive it effectually, in the season in which it is brought before us.

*Faith* and *prayer* are indispensable for the receiving and growth of grace.

Faith must first be exercised. This credits the existence and promise of grace—believes all that God says about it ; is "fully persuaded that what he has promised he is able also to perform," and takes Him simply at his word, assured that he would neither mock us nor deceive us. Faith therefore welcomes as infallibly true, the declaration of the way of recovery for lost sinners in the gospel, assures herself that God is merciful to man, and that forgiveness, justification, adoption, sanctification, the hope of glory, and eternal life, are placed within her grasp : Joy-

ful news, good tidings of great joy! I see a way of escape: I see the doors of the kingdom of heaven opened to all believers; I see a reconciled Father, I see a sufficient and complete Saviour, I see a guide and comforter, I see the strait gate, and the narrow way, and, by the grace of God, I will strive to enter in. May you all *obtain* this *precious* gift of *faith*, (2 Peter i. 1.) it will be like another sense to you, far more blessed than hearing or seeing, enabling you to discern the realities and the glories which most of all concern you as immortal beings. "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance: in thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." Ask for this gift and you shall receive.

Prayer is the cry of faith; the way in which grace is obtained and increased, and it is founded on our sense of need. Encouraged by the assurance that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, and that he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, we gladly avail ourselves of the gracious invitation. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Not boldly only, but earnestly,—you must strive in prayer: cold petitions will not do. David says, "My soul followeth hard after God;" the words denote earnest and strong desire. As the drowning man would cry for help, as Peter cried, "Lord, save or I perish;" so must we cry for grace. O be assured, careless prayers and heartless wishes never yet marked a saved soul. You must wrestle with God in prayer, if you would receive effectual grace. There will be strong cries and tears, like our Saviour's. Nothing will content you but God's favour and love, if you are in earnest for it. What you need above all other things is God's grace. Whatever else you get, without this you are miserably poor; whatever else you lose, if you get this you are unspeakably happy. Grace is the seed of glory—grace is the first thing. The Lord will give grace and then

glory. "Ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." All this shows the earnestness with which you should pray.

That we may have a better view of this, we will notice some seasons of receiving grace which you should watch for and improve.

Sabbaths in general are God's seasons—what a mercy it is to have one day entirely set apart for attending to the concerns of our souls. Now "if thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and shalt call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." (Isa. lviii. 13, 14.) Duly observe the sabbath, diligently seek God's grace on his own day, and in his appointed ordinances, and you shall not fail to receive it. O neglect not the sermons which you hear on the sabbath. When the gospel of Christ is faithfully preached, sermons are special seasons of grace. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" yes, all the rich blessings of the gospel are dispensed from Christ in the ministry of his own appointment, and Christians find this. A sermon either makes your heart more hardened by being disregarded, or more softened by being improved. Receive grace then on God's sabbath.

Afflictions again are seasons of grace. Whether it be sickness in your own person, or in your family and relatives, or losses and trials, or distresses; *afflictions spring not from the dust*, nor does the Lord afflict willingly, for his own pleasure, "but for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." (Heb. xii. 10.) So that all God's servants can say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy

word." (Psalm cxix. 67, 72.) O then let not the season of affliction pass away without accomplishing God's gracious design of love to your sonl. Receive grace in this season of grace.

TIMES OF CONVICTION are also seasons of grace. There are periods in a man's life when he feels, "I am a sinful creature, I am in danger of God's wrath, I must alter my conduct, I must begin anew." Now if while these convictions are lively, he does not qnench and resist them, bnt strives in fervent prayer for more grace, "according to his working," who worketh in ns "mightily" to increase and deepen them; then waiting thus on the Lord he shall receive larger and fuller communications of the Holy Spirit: bnt if yielding to sin and Satan, he trifles with conviction, and stifles and drowns it by rushing into worldly society, and plnnging into the cares and distractions of a sinful world, a season of grace is lost, and the soul becomes more insensible, more unimpressible than before.

But I need not enlarge, since every event, every circnmstance of life is to the Christian a season of grace. Just as in the cultivation of a garden, sometimes the gardener digs the gronnd, sometimes he prunes the trees, sometimes he sows the seed, sometimes he plucks up the weeds, but all is to make the garden beautiful and fruitful; so our God in varied ways deals with our souls, that grace may flourish in us, and bring forth fruit to his glory and our everlasting salvation.

Do you further ask how you may know whether you have effectually received grace? I reply, it is marked by LOVE. We love that grace which we have received. We glory in it. We value it above every thing. And surely it is above all price—surely every Christian does desire nothing so much as the grace of God. If men think it worth while to make their house comfortable where they only dwell a few years; if men think it worth while to lay up treasure on earth for a short life, O is it not, I appeal to your understanding as men, is it not infinitely better

worth while, to lay up our treasure where we must dwell for ever, and to have our wealth in a bank that can never break, and with a banker, who has the universe for his possession, and whose favour is better than life itself? The apostles so valued grace, that in every epistle they salute the churches with this prayer, "Grace be to you." While the term grace is offensive and unintelligible to those who receive it in vain, it is precious and delightful to those who receive it effectually. How the Apostle loves to dwell upon it! "God hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness to us through Christ Jesus. For by grace ye are saved." One sure note of an effectual reception of grace is a supreme value for it. I remember a time, before I knew my sinfulness and danger, being offended at seeing what I then thought so unmeaning a term as grace so often repeated in hymns; but when I felt my true state as a fallen creature, no word was more precious to me than this.

In practically applying the subject, I would solve some fears, and address different characters.

I would first SOLVE SOME FEARS, that may hinder and retard you in receiving this grace.

Perhaps you are afraid of this world's ridicule. If you become earnest in religion, you will be counted singular, and you cannot bear the laugh of your companions. Oh it is one of the most wonderful of the blindnesses and obliquities of our fallen nature, that persons wise and sensible in other things, who would not be laughed out of any worldly gain, should in a case so infinitely important, bend to a sneer, and be turned aside by a mere scoff. Be not laughed out of your sense of religion. Risk not so foolishly your soul. If you are so afraid of ridicule, think what ridicule will be worst at last. If a foolish companion can thus now affect you, how will you endure, when those words of God are fulfilled, "I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh?" Oh the inexpressible

folly of squandering away in mere earthly business, in vain pleasures, in idleness, in pomp and empty show, in ambition and the glory of this transitory world, that day of grace in which you might gain solid and everlasting joy, and an exceeding and eternal weight of glory !

Perhaps you fear that the day of grace may be past. Do you really fear this ? the fear itself is a hopeful sign, and shows that conscience is not yet seared or past feeling ; but oh let not the enemy contrive by such a fear to keep you inert and inactive, doing nothing till the day of grace be past.

One more fear may be an impediment to you. You may fear that you are not among God's elect, and therefore it is no use for you to strive. Who can tell you that you are not among his elect ; his decree of election is ever secret, till it is happily manifested by our turning to him ; not feignedly, but with all the heart. Repent and believe, and you shall assure your election.

Do you fear that you have not repented and believed, and feel that you are unable to do so ? Remember that Jesus is exalted to bestow these and all other spiritual blessings upon you. Acts v. 31.

I would in conclusion address different characters—

Have any reason to think that hitherto they have received the grace of God in vain, that they are yet in their sins ? Oh, I beseech you, " look diligently now, lest you fail of the grace of God." There is no time for farther delay. The Sun of righteousness has been shining for hours in the day of grace, and you have hitherto been fast asleep ; " the night cometh when no man can work ;" now cry mightily for grace. Oh let not the sermon you are now hearing find and leave your heart hardened ; but let it be as the awakening voice of the Saviour, leading you effectually to receive his grace.

Have any a besetting sin that entrammels and hampers them ? It is the day of grace and gospel liberty. Bring the power of grace against the power of sin, and it shall conquer your mightiest corruption. (Rom. v. 21.) Divine

grace shall be sufficient for you. Only "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might."

Are any backsliding from God, and dishonouring their holy vocation by sinful practices? Still we proclaim the day of grace, and say, "Yet return again unto me, saith the Lord; I will heal their backslidings and love them freely. Remember from whence you have fallen, repent and do the first works," and all shall be blotted out, and you shall yet be blessed and a blessing.

Are there any waiting, in the use of the means of grace, to receive grace? You shall not wait in vain. Let nothing turn you back from patiently waiting on the Lord, and expecting his grace: Do you please God your Saviour, though for this the whole world should be displeased. Let the righteous "hold on his way, and he shall wax stronger and stronger." (Job xvii. 9.) In Jesus there is an inexhaustible fulness, and out of that fulness, day by day, you shall "receive grace for grace."

## SERMON III.

### ON DEATH.

ECCLESIASTES XII. 7.

*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*

Death and judgment, and their issues, hell or heaven, must be regarded as events, preparation for which is no less reasonable than it is indispensible. It becomes a wise man to prepare for any event of importance which he has reason to believe will assuredly take place. Such a preparation is the more suitable and needful, when the event is not only certain and important, but its character becomes materially affected by our previous conduct with reference to it. And it is yet more incumbent if due preparation be attended with immensely beneficial consequences, nay, with nothing less than eternal life and glory. But what tongue can tell the madness of this neglect of preparation, if in addition to every thing else, the loss of all that bliss, and the suffering of eternal woe, be the certain consequence of that neglect.

Oh that I could entertain the hope that all your minds, without exception, were quickened to a realizing view of these momentous events. May the Lord bless the consideration of them now, to your everlasting good.

I begin with bringing before you the subject of death,—that time in reference to which it is said in our text.—

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it."

Let us consider,

1. The event referred to.
2. Its immediate consequences.
3. Its practical use.

## I. THE EVENT REFERRED TO.

Solomon, who had been describing, in highly figurative language, the gradual decay of the body and its dissolution, (Eccles. xii. 1—6.) in our text, brings before us the immediate results of that dissolution. The event, then, is death; the separation of the soul from the body;—the spirit leaving its frail tabernacle, and entering on a new and untried state of existence. I would point out its certainty,—the uncertainty of the time,—its nearness,—its just demand on man,—the Christian's victory.

1. Its certainty.

It is an event common to all men. "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" (Psalm lxxxix. 49.) "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death, and there is no discharge in that war." (Eccles. viii. 8.) You must certainly part with all you now hold so dear; let this truth, which should influence your whole life, penetrate your whole soul. The scenes which you now behold, you will one day cease to behold; you must bid farewell to every earthly object. You *must* die, or meet your coming Judge and Lord.

Oh, surely men in general are ignorant of this! They could not have their hearts so engaged in, and filled with cares for the good things of this world, did they know that these are all temporary and transient, and that there is certainly one overwhelming event before them, which will for ever separate them from all here below.

It is true indeed there is a period, when death shall be swallowed up in victory; when there shall be no more

death." (Rev. xxi. 4.) At our Redeemer's return, his living saints will be changed without death, and his dead saints will be raised to their glory and the wicked punished with everlasting destruction. This most stupendous of all events is hastening on, and may arrive even sooner than the period at which, in the ordinary course of nature, your death would take place, and this should be much on our minds as a most quickening motive to all holy living.

2. THE UNCERTAINTY of the time.

Certain as is the event itself, it is uncertain as to the time when it shall happen; and this fearfully increases the importance of being prepared for it. Seventy or eighty years form the farthest ordinary duration of life, but its average length is less than half of seventy. But even thirty years, or one year, or one day, is more than we can be certain will be ours. "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow; for what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (James iv. 13, 14.) "Man also knoweth not his time." (Eccles. ix. 12.) No one living can infallibly tell that his life shall be continued here, even for another day, or another night.—"Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." (Prov. xxvii. 1.)—"This night thy soul may be required." (Luke xii. 20.) There are thousands now alive, multitudes of whom are perhaps inwardly fancying,—"Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," who have no thought of death as at hand, and yet on whom this very sentence is passed and will be executed before to-morrow's sun shall rise.

Death may come thus suddenly to some of you! O my brethren, are you prepared for such a summons! "Be ye also ready."

3. ITS NEARNESS.

Do not suppose it is a distant event,—it is at hand, even at the door. Say rather with Job,—"the graves are ready for me, my days are swifter than a post, they flee

away ; they are passed as the swift ship ; " or with David, " Behold thou hast made my days as a handbreadth, and my age is as nothing before thee ; verily, every man living, at his best estate is altogether vanity." (Psalm xxxix. 5.) Only a thin veil of flesh hides the eternal world from your view. Any moment may rend it asunder. You can hardly mention the situation in which some one person or other has not died, or the circumstances in which some have not been called to appear before God.—If such an event be so near, how ready ought we to be ! " Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh ; at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning ; lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping."

4. Its just demand on man.

This is the most fearful characteristic of death. It is the issue of sin. It is not a mere change from one state to another, but it is the Divine appointment in consequence of man's disobedience. " It is appointed unto men once to die." Death is *the wages of sin.* It is the punishment of guilt. " The soul that sinneth, it shall die. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Romans v. 12.) The law justly condemns the transgressors ; and its fearful penalty is death. Here is *the sting of death.* Were we not sinners, death would have no terrors. But now he is *the King of Terrors ;* bringing along with him, " a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." Awful indeed is it for a sinful creature to fall into the hands of the living God, and under the immediate wrath of Him who says " Vengeance belongeth unto me." This is the terror of death. Are we provided against this evil ? All defence and security against other evils, while this tremendous evil is disregarded, is but mere vanity and childish folly. God himself is described as tenderly expostulating with men on this subject. " O that they were wise, that they

understood this, that they would consider their latter end." (Deut. xxxii.)

5. The Christian's victory.

There is full victory to be obtained over this mighty enemy, the great conqueror of the human race. But to attain this victory, none less than the only Son of God entered into the conflict. He became partaker of our flesh and blood, and yielded himself to death, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver those, who through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage." (Heb. ii. 14, 15,) On his cross he spoiled this "principality and power." (Col. ii. 15.) He has gone before us through the dark tomb ; he knows its innermost recesses, and so complete is the victory, that the Apostle says, "He hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (2 Tim. i. 10.) Now the believer in Him may defy this his greatest and last foe, and say, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death where is thy sting ? O grave where is thy victory ? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law ; but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Were you all, my brethren, true believers in the Lord Jesus, I might address you on death as a happy subject. This victory would be yours. O ask that the precious gift of faith may be bestowed from above upon you all. Remember this solemn assurance of our Lord Christ: "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that hath sent me, hath everlasting life." (John v. 51.)

Can I, as your minister, look at this victory without longing that you should all be among the victors. It is my fervent prayer to God for you, that you may all partake of this victory ; that you may all share this triumph. God, in mercy, grant it, for his Son's sake !

Such then is death, the event referred to ; it is certain to all, it is uncertain as to the time, but it is near at hand,

and the justly deserved penalty of sin, and the believer obtains a full victory over it.

We proceed to consider,

## II. THE IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES OF DEATH.

"The dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

The consequences here specified are two: according to the distinct parts of man, his body and his soul. There is the decay of the body in the dust, and the return of the soul to God.

### 1 The decay of the body in the dust.

The body was originally dust. "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." (Gen. ii. 7.) It teaches us a humbling and a profitable lesson. Man's body was not formed of any thing so valuable and solid as gold or silver; it was not formed of any thing so hard and durable even as iron or stone; dust, the least valuable of this earth's materials, that which is frailest and soonest dissipated, was used by our Divine Creator. His infinite wisdom and his Almighty power, moulded and fashioned the most unlikely of all materials, the very dust on which we tread, into the fair proportion, and beauty and comeliness of the human form. Learn the wisdom of God; learn the nothingness of man.

But this beauty of man soon passes away. "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth." (Isaiah xl. 6, 7.) "The grace of the fashion of it perisheth." (James i. 10.) Never forget, my dear brethren, that you are sustained from day to day, and from hour to hour, simply by Divine power. Your life is entirely dependant on the continual support of that Almighty Being by whom you were first made. Any thing that God commissions is powerful enough to cause your immediate death. "We dwell," says Job, "in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth."

(Job iv. 19.) Not before the elephant or the lion, the tiger or the bear merely,—not before that which is strong, and powerful,—but before the feeblest insect, that which itself can hardly be touched without being crushed, when it is commissioned by God, we are even crushed. God has but to remove his hand from under us, and we fall into the dust. "Thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust." (Psalm civ. 29.)

This is according to that original sentence pronounced on man's first transgression, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground : for out of it wast thou taken : for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." (Genesis iii. 19.) Where are the bodies of all the millions that have peopled our earth ; they are mingled with the dust on which those now living are moving and treading. Where are the myriads that have inhabited this busy and crowded metropolis from century to century : they are mouldering in the dust, and they are mingled with the earth. Once the eye glistened with joy and delight, once the ear was ravished with music, once the tongue was eloquent to speak, the hands powerful to labour, and the feet swift to run. Once the social circle was delighted with the mirth of the child, or cheered by the love of the mother, or instructed by the wisdom of the father, or directed by the counsel, and gladdened with the face of the friend : but all is now silent in the grave. Oh ! if the inhabitant of that grave could speak, its language would be this, "The grave is mine house, I have made my bed in darkness : I have said to corruption, Thou art my father : to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister." (Job xvii. 13, 14.) Here, my brethren, you and I must certainly be carried, here is "the house appointed for all living." Our dust will soon be mingled with the earth, till that day when the Almighty God who first created us, shall by his powerful voice re-collect the scattered particles, reform our frame, revivify the dust, recal its absent inhabitant, the immortal spirit, and raise us up to the judgment of the great day.

Are these things so? You know they are. My brethren, let us not then spend all our care on the perishing body. Still less, abuse this doctrine of human mortality to vain pleasure, "saying, Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." *Be not* thus *deceived.* Death may be changed from a curse to a blessing. You may, on Christian principles, find death lose all its sting, and be the very gate to life and glory. Fly to Jesus Christ, believe in him, "hear his saying, and you shall not taste of death." (John viii. 51, 52.)

May our God raise you all to the high hopes and the full joy of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

# SERMON IV.

## ON DEATH.

### ECCLESIASTES XII. 7.

*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*

We proposed to consider from these words, 1. The event referred to: 2. The consequences of that event; and, 3. Its practical use. We have already considered, The event referred to, Death, under five views: its certainty to all, its uncertainty as to the time, its nearness, its just demand on man, and its subjugation by the Christian. We have also entered on the consideration of the consequences of that event as twofold; the return of the body to the dust, (which was explained in the last sermon,) and the return of the soul to God.

We proceed to consider,

2. The return of the soul to God.

"The spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

You observe here a marked distinction in the account of the body and the soul; the body is dissolved and mingled with the earth from which it was taken; the spirit lives and returns to the living God who gave it. There is no sleep of the soul. The moment it is unclothed by the putting off the body, that moment it appears before the God of the spirits of all flesh. (2 Cor. v. 4—6.) The apostle's statement is decisive; he speaks of his "desire to

depart and be with Christ, which," he says, "is far better;" far better than living on earth, even though he could say, "To me to live is Christ," and amidst all the scenes of usefulness and the spiritual joys which he had here below.

When God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, he received a living soul, an immaterial and immortal spirit, which shall never cease to exist. Here is the true grandeur of man. It is not the king's palace or the king's throne: it is not earthly wisdom, or talents, or riches, that constitute man's nobility and glory. Every babe in its mother's arms, every peasant in his cottage of clay, every poor heathen idolater, every savage roaming through the woods, has lodged in his bosom, that which is of more value than worlds upon worlds—even an immortal soul. He has that within which is indestructible and imperishable. You cannot put a period to its existence: men may "kill the body, but after that they have no more that they can do;" they cannot destroy the soul. Your soul lives, and shall live for ever.

Mark then the course of the soul after death. Immediately on the death of the body, the soul appears before God—solitary, unaccompanied by any earthly attendants; the master without his servants, and the servant without his master; the husband without his wife, and the wife without the husband; the parent without the child, and the child without the parent. Alone, and at the gate of death, stripped of all earthly titles and distinctions, and bared of all riches, tenements, and possessions, just as "we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out:" (1 Tim. vi. 7.) so by itself, the spirit enters the eternal world, and sees God face to face.

God, that has been so little in man's thoughts, now appears to the soul in all his unutterable purity, and majesty, and glory. God is now every thing to the soul: all other beings are lost in the brightness of his presence; and now first man beholds *him as he is*—so holy that he charges the angels with folly, so pure that the heavens are

not clean in his sight, so lovely and resplendent that the eye of the believer gazes with unceasing delight on his beauty. (Psalm xxvii. 4. Isaiah xxxiii. 7.)

When spirits thus return to God, an immediate separation takes place, deciding their condition for ever. There are two, and but two distinct abodes for the spirit, in the regions of the departed, abodes in which each must dwell till the general resurrection of all flesh at the last day.

There is THE ABODE OF THE LOST; there are "the spirits in prison," (1 Peter iii. 19.) there are the angels that sinned, "cast down into hell, and delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." (2 Peter ii. 4.) When the soul of the wicked leaves its body, it is immediately consigned to the regions of woe. When the rich man was buried, his soul was directly in the place of misery, and "in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment," longing for Lazarus even to "dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool his tongue, for he was tormented in that flame." O tremendous abode—all hope for ever gone; the blackness of darkness surrounding them on every side; "the face of him that sitteth on the throne" frowning upon them, and "the wrath of the Lamb" over them through eternity! O flee from this wrath to come: and may God, in tender mercy, give you to know the things which belong to your everlasting peace!

There is, however, blessed for ever be our God, another abode, THE ABODE OF THE RIGHTEOUS, in which their spirits dwell till their bodies shall be raised from the grave. On leaving their bodies, their spirits are received and are welcomed by the Lord Jesus our Saviour; him they at length behold; they see his glory which he had with the Father, before the world was; they have sweet access to God as a loving Father, and full communion with him; they dwell in joyful hope of the resurrection, amid the innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men with Christ. Thus Stephen prays, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" thus Paul desired to be "present with the Lord;" thus Lazarus was "carried by the angels onit

Abraham's bosom ;" and thus the penitent thief was assured, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." In those blessed regions, they "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven," free from every sorrow and temptation, from every fear and anxiety, from every want and every care ; they rejoice in the Saviour's presence and love, waiting for the accomplishment of the number of God's elect, and the final triumph of the resurrection-day, and the consummation of bliss, both in body and soul.

O blissful state ! Earnestly strive that you may all arrive there. O may we sacrifice every thing for this : may we help each other to gain it ! Let us beware of throwing any hindrances in the way of each other. My beloved people, O that I may meet you there ! "My joy and crown" will be your possession of the "exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

## III. THE PRACTICAL USE OF THE SUBJECT.

### 1. Learn the evil of death to the wicked.

What tongue can describe, what heart can imagine, all the unutterable evils comprehended in this one word, Death, as it regards the wicked ; That which is seen is painful, the weeping friends around the bed, the bodily suffering, the gasping breath, the groans and distress, and expiring sighs, the breathless pallid corpse, the coffin, the funeral procession, the dark grave, and the mouldering body ;—but all this is but the shadow of death. That which is unseen is death's substance ; sin and God's wrath against the sinner ; the immediate presence of the offended Judge, and the irremediable consequences which follow. Remember, oh ! remember, death is a certain event, it must overtake you. You cannot by any possible contrivances guard against its approach ; all the gold of Mexico or Peru, all the skill of the ablest physicians, all the care and tenderness of the most beloved friends, all the efforts of forecast and providence, cannot turn away death. He laughs at all human contrivances, and with steady

steps proceeds onward, conquering all. You may imagine a security, but the Bible says, "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand." Remember, oh ! remember death brings you into the presence of your Creator. However you may have managed to shut out the thoughts of God, however you may have shunned his presence, and have lived as without God in the world, then you must appear before his searching eye, and be under his immediate hand. Remember, oh ! remember, death decides your state for eternity. "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." (Eccles. ix. 10.) "In the place where the tree falleth, there shall it be." (Eccles. xi. 3.) In that world the saying shall be realized, "He that is unjust let him be unjust still ; and he that is filthy let him be filthy still." (Rev. xxii. 11.) Between the abodes of the righteous and the wicked, there is an impassable space, "a great gulf fixed," which neither righteous nor wicked can pass over. Remember, then, oh ! remember, that at death the wicked begin an eternity of woe. What evil can be compared with this—say you lose everything for religion, you forfeit situation, friends, health, life itself : O happy loss, if you may but escape the bitter pains of eternal death. Lord, let not our eyes any longer be blinded by Satan : Enable us to see our danger ! awake, poor sinner, awake ! open, O Lord, open thou the eyes of sinners, even of some sinners now in thy presence, and awaken them from the sleep of sin !

O my brethren, a time is coming which will awaken you, when death comes, you will be roused, and cry out for a little longer space, and hell will be seen to be a real and tremendous evil. Believe me, it is now the same evil as it will be seen to be on your death-bed, only with this blessed difference ; you have now time to escape the evil, and to attain security for ever. O redeem time for your soul's salvation ! Linger no more. "Let the wicked at once forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will

have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah lv. 7.)

2. LEARN THE BLESSEDNESS OF DEATH TO THE BELIEVER.

In truth, in the evil sense, the believer never dies. Our Saviour Christ, says, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." (John xi. 26.) "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." All that is evil in death, is by Christ so removed, that the believer may say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." As it regards the body, if it be for a moment an enemy, it is the last enemy, and will assuredly at length be utterly destroyed. Christ has also the keys of death, and can, and does set at liberty all its captives. And as it regards the soul, death is our best friend ; it is equally with life itself numbered among the Christian privileges—"Whether life or death, all are your's"—it is a dark door, "the shadow of death," but the darkness is on this side and not on the other ; when it opens, it introduces us to light, and life, aud glory, and shuts out for ever all darkness and misery. It is the end of trial and temptation : no more conflicts nor warfare ; no more sins nor sorrows, can harass and injure the happy believer. He is shut in by death from the world of death, and brought by this his last enemy safe into the mansions of endless life. The Scriptures lift up the veil that hides the eternal world, and shew us the angels waiting round the pillow of the dying believer, longing to have another happy spirit added to them ; the Scriptures shew the Christian, that, to him this is the land of darkness and tears : and the unseen world, the true land of light and joy ; "in thy presence is fulness of joy." May we have but a good hope through grace of this happiness, and we shall long, not for life, but for death, (Phil. i. 23.) and say with David, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God : when shall I come and appear before God ?" (Psalm xlii. 2.)

3. Learn the IMPORTANCE OF PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

It is not a speculative subject we have now brought before you. It is not a vain thing. It deeply and intimately concerns you. It will add much to your comfort here to be delivered from the bondage of the fear of death; and what a glorious truth! you may be delivered from all fear of death; you may be safe from those never-ending evils, and be a partaker of that never-ending felicity to which it introduces God's servants. I repeat again and again, however young, or wise, or strong, or powerful, you "must" die, or meet the coming of the Lord. Secure then a better life. Like Noah, enter the refuge. "He, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." (Heb. xi. 7.) O let Christ be your refuge. Remember, that preparation for death is not a work to be done in a little time. A whole life ought to be devoted to it, yet people defer to the last dregs of life that great work of life which requires all our energies and powers. Here is the great artifice of Satan; he prevails on men to put off till it be too late, the great work of preparation. "They say, Peace and safety, till sudden destruction comes, and they cannot escape. The longer you defer this work, the greater and more arduous you will find it to be, the less strength you will have for it, and the more your bodily infirmities will disable you. Now, even "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

Do you ask how you are to prepare for death? O fly without delay to Christ Jesus, the only Deliverer from death, the only Conqueror over death! He says, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." (John xi. 25.) Now, he will wash all your sins away in his blood; now, your souls may be covered with the spotless and glorious robe of his righteousness; now, his Spirit will make you meet for the heavenly inheritance. O apply, I beseech you, apply this very day to him! "Before you give sleep to your eyes, or slumber to your eyelids," seek your Saviour "while he may be found, call upon him while he

is near. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life ;" (1 John v. 12.) "but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John v. 36.) Here is your first and chief preparation for death, to "win Christ and be found in him."

Having received Christ as our Saviour, there is a meetness, a state of actual readiness, through his Spirit given to every Christian, so that death does not take him by surprise. He may indeed, like the wise virgins, slumber and sleep. Let us then be watchful, "The children of the light, and the children of the day," should not slumber ; "therefore let us not sleep as do others, but watch and be sober." Christians, "let your lights be burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord.—Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching." Meditate, often, and seriously, on death. Even regard it as one of your blessings ; "putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ ; who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."

## SERMON V.

### ON THE RESURRECTION.

JOHN V. 28, 29.

*The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*

OUR blessed Lord here distinctly declares the doctrine of the resurrection of the body ; to the righteous a most cheering and joyful truth. Those who have wept over the lifeless corpse of a departed saint, and have followed with bitter anguish the funeral bier to the grave, and have seen the coffin which contained all that remained of this beloved friend deposited in the silent grave, and have thought of it as lost, and almost lost for ever, may lift up their heads. That body is the sacred dust of him who believed in Jesus, and which the Divine Spirit once inhabited ; it is not dead, it only sleeps in the Lord, and shall revive again with new beauty and freshness, fashioned like to his glorious body, "according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself." (Phil. iii. 21.)

The doctrine of the resurrection is eminently essential and fundamental. When some among the Corinthians denied this doctrine, the Apostle urgently pressed its importance : "How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead ? " (1 Cor. xv. 12.)—and alluding

to the many sufferings of the first Christians, he tells them, "if in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable," (1 Cor. xv. 19.) and assures them, "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept." (1 Cor. xv. 20.)

May your minds, then, my brethren, be well established in this truth. It is Satan's great aim to weaken our faith, and to obscure our view of the resurrection. Because we see it not, and there seem apparent hindrances from the decay of the body, sinful man easily persuades himself that there will be no resurrection, and even Christians are often deprived of the comfort and advantage they might possess, were their faith on this momentous subject more clear and distinct.

We will consider,

1. The resurrection itself.
2. Its certain approach.
3. Its universal extent.
4. Its decisive results.
5. Its practical improvement.

## I. THE RESURRECTION ITSELF.

They "that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth."

We notice the body raised; the voice calling it forth; the coming forth.

### 1. The body raised.

Our Lord is here speaking of the resurrection of the body. Properly speaking, the soul never dies; it is the body only that is mingled with the dust, and laid in the grave, and the same body shall be raised. If it were another body, it would not be a resurrection, but a new creation. Job's testimony on this point is very clear. "Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another," (Job xix. 26.) Our identical body, once laid in the grave, shall be raised up. The souls of the wicked are in present torment,

a torment that has a fearful expectation of the future, and a torment that will be amazingly aggravated, when the body in which they sinned shall rise again, with all the tremendous recollection and revival of past sins, to be the inlet of a sorer punishment, to be reunited to the soul, for the final condemnation of both. O may you all be delivered from this woe!

The souls of the righteous are on the other hand in present blessedness, with a joyful anticipation of an increased bliss. They are described as "absent from the body and present with the Lord." (2 Cor. v. 8.) Our Lord, from that declaration of God to Moses, long after the death of the Patriarchs, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," (Matt. xxii. 32.) takes occasion to show that they were then living, for, "he is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living, for all live to him:" and seeing that he is the God not merely of the soul, but of the whole person, he also shews from the same passage "the resurrection of the dead," and therefore that the body shall be raised from its state of death. Incalculably will their joy be enhanced when their poor vile body, ransomed from the power of the grave, and redeemed from death, shall be raised incorruptible and glorious, with every capacity to serve God perfectly and for ever. May you all enter into this joy!

2. THE VOICE CALLING IT FORTH:—

"Shall hear his voice."

The resurrection of the body seems to be attended with some apparently insurmountable difficulties. Some bodies have been consumed to ashes, and the ashes scattered over the surface of the earth. Others have been devoured by wild beasts, and have become a part of their substance, and others again have been the food of their fellow-men. From these difficulties, the Sadducees of old denied the resurrection of the dead. Like modern infidels they insinuate impossibilities against clear revelation. Our Saviour meets all such cavils, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." (Matt. xxii. 29.)

We assert, then, from the word of God, that the same body shall rise again. How is this possible? To man even an adequate conception is impossible. But look at what calls them forth—the voice of Christ, the voice of the Son of God, the voice of the Creator of all things, the voice of "God over all blessed for ever." (Rom. ix. 5.) That voice said, "Let there be light, and there was light." (Gen. i. 3.) that voice said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature— and it was so." (Gen. i. 24.) That voice said, "Let us make man," and "man was created," (Gen. i. 26.) Oh, the unutterable power of that Divine Redeemer, whom an unbelieving world slights, scoffs at, and scorns! It will not be so in that great day, but as when at the tomb of Lazarus, the voice, "Lazarus come forth," (John xi. 43,) penetrated every bone, every muscle, and every nerve of the decaying body, "and he that was dead came forth," so when "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trump of God"—proclaiming, "All ye that are in the graves, come forth;" the energy of that voice will break through every obstacle, search the inmost recesses of every receptacle of the dead, bring together every part, and reanimate the whole; not one grave shall retain its tenant, or refuse obedience to the almighty and all-prevailing summons.

Talk any of difficulties? all creation furnishes you with emblems and illustration. Every fresh day, with its new light and heat and varied blessings, is a resurrection from the darkness of the night. Every verdant spring, with all its freshness and life and luxuriance, is a resurrection from the frost, the torpor and the death of winter. Every harvest which we see waving in the fields is a resurrection of the seed-corn buried, dead, and quickened again. Innumerable insects floating in the air, were once apparently inanimate substances, but they have risen again to life and activity. It is idle to talk of difficulties to him to whom nothing is impossible; and why, it may well be asked, "why should it be thought incredible that God should

raise the dead," when his word has assured us that he will? If a watch-maker can take a watch to pieces and again put together the parts as they lie before him, the Creator of all may well reconstruct the human frame, which by death he has for a season separated, and the parts of which, wherever they are, all lie before him.

O brethren, what a shout will that be which re-echoes through creation, and reaches and rouses the slumbering dust! How will it sound to us? Will it be a voice full of woe, or a voice full of joy? This depends on your present state. O fly to Christ now, confess him now, if you would hear that sound without alarm; if you would welcome that voice as a voice of joy.

3. The coming forth.

We have a representation of this as it respects Israel, in the valley which was full of bones: (Ezek. xxxvii. 1—10.) these at the word of the Lord came together, and the sinews and the flesh were brought upon them, and the breath came into them, and they lived, an exceeding great army.

But it is not one valley, but every place shall give up the dead there contained. In Daniel it is asserted, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." (Dan. xii. 2.) In the description of that day it is said, (Rev. xx. 4—13.) of the saints, "they lived and reigned;" and of others, "the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them."

Curiosity here may ask a thousand questions: "how are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" (1 Cor. xv. 35.) We cannot go a single step beyond the Scriptures, and the Bible was not written to satisfy mere curiosity, but to make us wise unto salvation. Oh, how joyful will be the resurrection of the righteous? "The dead in Christ shall rise first," (1 Thess. iv. 16; 1 Cor. xv. 23,) and those living on the earth, who believe in his name, "shall then be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air." They will all come forth per-

fectly distinct and distinguishable: "we shall know as we are known." If we are to "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven," (Matt. viii. 11.) we shall know those blessed saints. When the Apostle says, the Thessalonians were to be his "hope, and joy and crown of rejoicing," (Matt. ii. 19.) he manifestly implies that he should know them. All our faculties will rather be infinitely improved and heightened, than diminished; as there is difference between the child and the man, so will there be a vast superiority in our capacity and knowledge, and the coming forth of the righteous will be as the rising of the sun, full of beauty, and full of glory, rejoicing to run his course.

But O how fearful will be the coming forth of the wicked! Imagine that day in which they come forth; suddenly awakened out of the sleep of death, amidst the crumbling world, the heavens departing as a scroll when it is rolled together, the mountains and islands moving out of their places, the elements melting with fervent heat; the wicked are affected by one thing more than all these convulsions of worlds, they dread more than all "the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and the wrath of the Lamb:" (Rev. vi. 16; xx. 11.) and they cry to the rocks and mountains, Fall on us and hide us.

Brethren, you and I must be in the number then raised. The Lord grant it may be among the righteous, and not among the wicked!

## II. ITS CERTAIN APPROACH.

The hour is coming, it is fixed, it will be sudden and unavoidable.

1. IT IS FIXED.

God has fixed a precise and particular time. "He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness." (Acts xvii. 31.) The very season is determined, as our Lord declares, "the hour is coming." But though fixed, God has not revealed it, and therefore the precise time is not known to any created being; nor was

the mediator commissioned to reveal it to man ; " That day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." (Mark xiii. 32.) As the hour of his death is unknown to each individual, so the hour of the general resurrection is unknown to any part of created beings. This is for many appointed ends ; and the practical lessons are, to take heed not to be " overcharged with the pleasures and cares of this life, (Luke xxi. 34.) but ever to be watchful and prayerful. Brethren, every day that passes along, every hour that hastens away, every pulse that beats within you, shortens the distance between you and this great and last scene. There is no hindering its advance. You may sooner stop the sun in its progress across the circuit of the sky, than delay the approach of this fixed hour.

2. The hour will be also SUDDEN.

It is frequently compared in the Scriptures to the coming of a thief. If the master " of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up." (Matt. xxiv. 43.) " Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." (1 Thess. v. 2. and 2 Peter iii. 10, 11.) Hence its coming will be sudden and unexpected. The mass of mankind will be living and acting just as they do now, giving their minds wholly to worldly things, (Matt. xxiv. 37.) and thinking of nothing less than of the resurrection-day. In the parable of the virgins it is said, " At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh ! " Midnight is the hour when men are wrapped up in darkness and slumber, and wholly unthinking of danger. O brethren, often place yourself in the situation in which men will then be placed. Think within yourselves, " what would be my feelings if the trumpet were now to sound, if the great shout were now to be heard, if the heavens were now to roll away, and the great white throne now to appear ! Am I ready ? Is the judge my friend ? "

3. The hour will be UNAVOIDABLE.

No skill or wisdom of man, no human eloquence can turn it aside; no riches can bribe a delay; no combined strength of armies or of nations can retard it, and no infidelity hinder its approach. As all the army of Pharaoh could not stop the returning waves of the Red Sea; as all the multitudes of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah could not restrain the fire from heaven; as the inhabitants of the whole earth, with all their unbelief and their multitude, could not stay the waters of the deluge, so impossible will it be for men to restrain the progress of that hour, "in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and in which the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." O brethren, seeing this, "what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness." I confess when I look at these things, I feel more especially my own sinful negligence and coldness. O that I were myself more alive to them, then I should be more likely to quicken you. Brethren, we are mutually concerned in this all-important hour; let us quicken each other to a more anxious care of the soul, that this day may not find us unprepared. As your minister, I entreat your prayers, that I myself, realizing these truths, may speak more fervently and more according to their unspeakable magnitude, and you may thus be more stirred up to seek the true refuge.

## III. ITS UNIVERSAL EXTENT.

ALL "that are in the graves."

It might have afforded some hope to the wicked, if only the just were to have been raised at the last: though the expectation of being entirely reduced to nothing, as if we had never been, is in itself most gloomy and miserable: but there is not the refuge of even such an expectation. The scriptures are clear that all the dead shall rise again: it is intimated in the declaration in Daniel, they "that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting con-

tempt." (Dan. xii. 2.) St. Paul clearly asserts, "that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." (Acts xxiv. 15.) Our Lord assures us, "all that are in the graves shall come forth." In the account of the last judgment, we find, that "before him shall be gathered all nations,"—the wicked as well as the righteous. The Apostle tells the Romans, "We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." (Rom. xiv. 10.) and he assures the Corinthians more in detail, "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor. v. 10.) Thus plain and decisive are the scriptures, as to the universality of the resurrection.

It comprehends, therefore, all ages ; from him who has lived the most lengthened period, to the youngest babe ; all shall rise again from the grave. Have you, my children, lost an aged Christian father or mother ? There you shall meet them again ; and if you follow their faith and patience, meet them at the Saviour's right hand. Have you, Christian parents, lost your babes ? You shall then recover them, and out of the mouths of those "babes, God will perfect praise." All ranks and classes shall then be raised—kings and princes, nobles and men of wealth ; not indeed with their worldly distinctions, but they shall rise equally with the poor and needy. Statesmen, not at the head of empires ; and generals of armies, not with collections of armed men at their command ; but individually to appear before God. The Apostle John having beheld that scene in prophetic vision, says of it, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life ; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. (Rev. xx. 12.)

O brethren, methinks the universality of our death and resurrection should much endear us to each other. Those who have been in one common war, and have shared in

one victory, love each other as fellow-soldiers ; those who have been wrecked in one storm, and saved in one life-boat, love each other as fellow-sailors ; and shall not we, who have to pass through the deep valley of the shadow of death, and have all to hear the trumpet sound, and have all to be raised again from the graves—shall not we, as fellow-travellers in the same pilgrimage, love one another fervently, and with a pure heart ? shall we not seek to help each other in attaining the resurrection unto life ?

But I forbear the further consideration of this subject till the evening.

# SERMON VI.

## ON THE RESURRECTION.

JOHN V. 28, 29.

*The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*

We this morning proposed to consider five points from this text ;—1. The resurrection itself ; 2. Its certain approach ; 3. Its universal extent ; 4. Its decisive results ; 5. Its practical improvement. Three of these have been explained. In considering the resurrection itself, we noticed, The body raised, The voice calling it forth, and The coming forth. In considering its approach, we shewed that it was fixed, and would be sudden and unavoidable ; and then explained its universal extent. We have now to consider,

4. Its decisive results.
5. Its practical Improvement.

### IV. ITS DECISIVE RESULTS.

"They that have done good, unto the Resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

We notice the characters described, and the division made.

1. THE CHARACTERS DESCRIBED. They are twofold—the good and the evil.

There are multitudes of distinctions here; high and low, rich and poor, young and old, learned and unlearned; there are multitudes of characters; the proud and the abject, the sober and respectable, the moral and the decent, the formalist and the sincere, the scorner and the serious, the believer and the unbeliever; but they are all arranged under two classes hereafter, and classes which have no reference to their worldly situation, nor to their outward appearance before men; but to their true character in the sight of God.

One character is marked by this—"the doers of good."

Naturally man is selfish, and aims only at his own aggrandizement, or pleasure, or advantage; but when he is truly converted to God, brought to see his danger through sin, his guilt before God, and his just desert; when he is further brought to see his salvation by grace through faith: then, that deeply extended, that strong and multiplied root of selfishness, is shaken to its farthest ramifications, and it shall finally be altogether uprooted. He is made a new creature in Christ Jesus. Gratitude becomes the constraining principle of action, his faith works by love, and the great aim of his life is to do good. (Eph. ii. 8.) Though we "are saved by grace through faith," and that "not of works, lest any man should boast," yet is this salvation ever seen by good works as its inseparable fruit; they are not the cause, but the effect of salvation; they are not the condition, but a part—the essential part of salvation. "We are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. ii. 10.) The Christian, like his Saviour, is a man going about doing good; this is his daily life and business, and he seeks to fill every hour with good works.

O let me exhort you to be doers of good; whatever your situation be, aim at this—to do good. You cannot do too much of that which is really good before God and man;

let none of your talents be laid up unimproved ; lay out time, and knowledge, and strength, and property, and all you have, to do good.

Another character is marked by this—" doer of evil."

And here we must distinguish between what God reckons evil, and what man reckons evil ; for very often " that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God." (Luke xvi. 15.) This is the case with all the works of unconverted men. In the language of the Thirteenth Article of the Church of England, " Works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God . . . . yea, rather for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." This may serve to undeceive your hearts, who are trusting in your own goodness. All your actions, when perfectly right before man, may be fearfully wrong before God ; before man, your character may be unimpeachable, and your actions upright and benevolent ; in human society you may be a noble and praiseworthy character—and yet, before God, be a doer of evil. That is good in the sight of God, which springs from faith in him and love to him ; but if you have not obeyed the command to believe in the Lord Jesus ; if, in what you do, you have no eye to the glory of God, no regard to his will, no care to please him ; if self be the real end of all your actions, then is your life full of evil in his sight, then is all the guilt of unpardoned sin upon you ; then will you rise at the last day,—Oh ! I speak it in pain, but I speak it in faithfulness and love,—you will rise at the last day among the doers of evil.

May the Divine Spirit now speak powerfully in your consciences, and unmask you to yourselves, and lead you to see your true state ; that ere it be too late, and the lamp of life expire, you may know and follow what belongs to your peace !

We proceed to consider, THE DIVISION MADE.

This is twofold also, according to the two characters. We notice,

1st. THE RESURRECTION OF LIFE.

This resurrection to life is at the coming of Christ. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory—if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." (Col. iii. 4.) Our union with Christ here, is the root of our rising to life hereafter. The Apostle dwells at length on this subject in the xvth chapter of 1 Corinthians, as on a theme in which his heart was at home. He says, shewing the origin of our resurrection, "In Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. . . . . (2 Cor. xv. 22, 23.) There are celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body . . . . (2 Cor. xv. 40—44.) We shall all be changed; for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality; and then," and not till then fully "shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." (2 Cor. xv. 53, 54.) There is much here that we cannot comprehend: it is a glory like that of the sun, the very brightness of which dazzles and blinds. A spiritual body seems to unite opposite natures, and to contradict all our notions; but "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." (1 Cor. xv. 50.) Unspeakably, then, inconceivably glorious will be the human frame. The glorious body of Christ as transfigured on the Mount, seems the fullest representation of the risen body of his people.—"His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light:" (Matt. xvii. 2) so also "shall the righteous

shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."—(Matt. xiii. 34.) "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars, for ever and ever." (Dan. xii. 3.)

Oh ! surpassing glory ! when all the righteous are assembled above, and these myriads of suns, beaming forth rays of splendour, are for ever shining in the glorious firmament of heaven ; their spiritual, their powerful, their incorruptible, their glorified bodies, not clogging, but aiding and giving activity and quickness to the intellectual faculty. They are all made like God in holiness and happiness ; they dwell in his presence, and are engaged in the enjoyment and service of God, who is all, and in all : they are thus together joint sharers of each other's bliss for ever and ever.

Should not our hearts faint to reach this bliss ? should not our souls aspire after this glory ! O you who are following riches, here are enduring riches ! O you who are thirsting after pleasure, here are pleasures for evermore ! O you who are panting after honour, by patient continuance in well-doing, here seek for glory, and honour, and immortality !

There is another scene it is my painful duty to bring before you.

2. THE RESURRECTION OF DAMNATION.

The doers of evil are brought before the awful and all-penetrating eye of the great Judge of all. That glorious Being, wearing our form, was mocked and despised, and the evil-doers still despise his name and slight his grace ; but what words can utter the horrors included in this description—"the resurrection of damnation," when they are brought before the once despised but now glorious Emmanuel ! As the body is raised, all the sins that every member of that body has committed, will be manifested. All the false and angry and proud words that the tongue has spoken, all the evil ways in which the feet have walked, all the sinful converse to which the ear has lis-

tened, all the wicked works that the hands have done, will then be exhibited before an assembled world, in the very resurrection of sinful men. Gladly would the soul escape from the accursed re-union with the body in which it sinned. The suicide, in his madness to escape a temporary evil, rushes on an eternal evil: but vain is the attempt to escape in this resurrection; there is no possibility of destroying our existence in that world; not one suicide can take that life away. Their bodies are raised incorruptible; but this only embitters the woe to which they rise. Their understandings then will be cleared to discern the folly of sin, and the truth of God's word; there will not be one infidel at the resurrection of damnation: this again heightens their woe. The commission of some sins also may cease; they cannot cheat, they cannot get drunk, they cannot be licentious: but while the power of gratification is gone, the love of sin remains, as a worm that never dies. Yet all this is but the beginning of sorrows; the fearful word, damnation, exposes to our view another evil, beyond conception tremendous—the wrath of God, his curse, the terrors of the Lord: and this their portion for ever!

My beloved people, these are the solemn truths of God's word. I believe them from my heart; and can I believe them and think that any of you are exposed to this greatest of all possible dangers, and not warn you, and exhort you, and entreat you to have pity on yourselves, and hasten your escape from the coming storm?

But I hasten to close with

## V. THE PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT OF THIS SUBJECT.

What does the doctrine of the Resurrection teach us?

IT SHOULD STRENGTHEN OUR HOPE OF REGENERATION. This is the very lesson which our Lord is here drawing. You observe his argument in the verses before our text, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father

hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself: And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man." (John v. 24, 25.) He then confirms this statement of his giving spiritual life, by the yet more remarkable fact of our text, the resurrection of the body. "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice." (John v. 28.) He who can raise the dead body, can also quicken the dead soul. O blessed truth! We need not preach the Saviour's power to open the graves and bring all therein to judgment, without preaching also his present ability to give you spiritual life. Desire you the resurrection of life? Remember, "he that hath the Son hath life," even eternal life; and the voice of Christ sounding forth in his word, and proclaimed by his ministers, is effectual to give spiritual life. O may we find it so at this time. Lord Jesus, quicken the dead here. Give to multitudes here spiritual life. I long for the day when I shall see the symptoms of spiritual life multiply, and behold you all evidently and deeply concerned about your eternal interests.

IT SHOULD QUICKEN US TO A HOLY LIFE.

As the harvest is according to the seed sown, so is the resurrection. "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. vi. 8.) Do you desire to escape the fearful resurrection of damnation; do you desire a beautiful and glorious body, and a holy and perfect soul?—then live to God now, in doing good. When St. Paul speaks of his "having hope towards God, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust," he adds, "And herein do I exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence, towards God, and towards men." (Acts xxiv. 15, 16.) Often place these last scenes before your eyes; if you are becoming cold and careless in the ways of Christ, think of the resurrection-day.

IT SHOULD RAISE US ABOVE WORLDLY SORROW.

How peculiarly heavy were Job's sorrows and afflictions; but in the midst of them he draws comfort from this doctrine: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." (Job xix. 25, 26.) David found similar consolation. "My flesh shall rest in hope, for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell." (Psalm xvi. 9, 10.) Death is but a rest previous to the morning of the resurrection. When we lose a beloved brother in Christ, we may, and should mourn the loss, (Isa. lvii. 1,) but we cannot sorrow "even as those which have no hope; for all which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him." (1 Thess. iv. 13, 14.) "The time is short"—the resurrection-day is at hand, when we shall again receive the dead to life.

IT ILLUSTRATES ALL GOD'S PERFECTIONS.

Now, many things are dark and obscure; we see things but in part. Wicked men seem to go unpunished; they often have authority and power, and use it wickedly; good men are tried and afflicted, despised, and lightly esteemed; many things seem quite out of place, and Satan triumphs, and the godly mourn, and the wicked flourish. But the resurrection-day will clear up things; just as the sun dispels the mists and fogs, and discovers to us the beauty of nature, so the rising of the Sun of Righteousness in the morning of the resurrection will clear up all the now hidden beauties of providence and grace. We shall discover with inexpressible clearness and distinctness, the wisdom and truth, the justice and mercy of all God's dealings, and say from the heart, "He hath done all things well." (Mark vii. 27.)

IT COMPLETES THE WORK OF REDEMPTION.

In one view, that was completed, when on the cross our Saviour uttered the words, "It is finished." A further step in its completeness was taken when he, "the first-begotten of the dead, rose from the dead." (Rev. i. 5.)

The first-fruits only however, of them that slept were then presented to God ; but when all that sleep in Jesus are raised, then shall "the last enemy, death, be destroyed," yes, "swallowed up in victory," and the grand design of redemption "in bringing many sons to glory," be completely accomplished.

And now, brethren, I have set these things before you, let me ask, what are your purposes ? The gospel is either "a savour of death unto death," or, "a savour of life unto life." (2 Cor. ii. 16.) If, just excited for a moment, you leave the house of God, and your seriousness is dissipated in worldly conversation, and you return to your old course again, you will be more hardened than ever, and farther from God, and more likely to perish with the wicked, than if the gospel light had never beamed upon you. I beseech you, every one, for your own sake, for my sake, for the Saviour's sake, let not this be the sad end of our labours, no, not to one soul among you !

But if, on the other hand, this all-important subject lead any hitherto careless to inquire, "What must I do do to be saved ?" I proclaim in their ears, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts xvi. 30, 31.)

And as to you, my Christian brethren, may this subject quicken every spiritual affection in your hearts. May you say and feel with the apostle, "I count all things but loss for Christ, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." (Phil. iii. 3, 10.)

## SERMON VII.

### THE JUDGMENT-DAY.

REVELATION XX. 11—13.

*And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it: and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.*

And is there such an event to be anticipated? And must earth and heaven fly away, and this great white throne, with its awful and transcendently glorious Judge seated upon it, appear? And must the whole human race stand before Him? And every one be judged according to their works? Surely every thought is directed towards, and influenced by, such an event. Surely all other matters that can engage the mind of man will be subordinate to this overwhelming truth! We say every Sabbath, "We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge," and yet alas! alas! the prospect of any temporal loss or worldly advantage will far more readily enter into the mind, and

occupy the whole attention of those beings for whom that judgment is set.

Surely were there not a tremendous perverseness within, a deep slumber, an awful death in trespasses and sins. to this event all eyes would be directed, on this all thoughts would be engaged, by this all cares engrossed. Every fear and hope, joy and sorrow, would have a reference to, a bearing on our acceptance at last before the great and final Judge.

How is this unconcern to be removed, but by distinctly placing the subject before you ? May our God enable me to do so at this time.

We have already considered death conducting the spirit into the eternal world ; the awful realities of the resurrection ; the sound of the trumpet ; the great shout heard ; the dead bodies awakened ; the Judge descending, and the twofold resurrection, that of life and that of damnation. We will now notice more particularly the proceedings of this great day, under these heads—

1. THE JUDGE UPON THE THRONE.
2. THE ASSEMBLY GATHERED BEFORE HIM.
3. THE OPENING OF THE BOOKS.
4. THE JUDGMENT ITSELF.

## I. THE JUDGE UPON THE THRONE.

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them."

We have here the throne of judgment ; the Judge seated on it ; the effect of his appearance.

1. THE THRONE OF JUDGMENT—"a great white throne."

It is a *throne,* under which term is conveyed to us the idea of majesty and dominion. It is the throne of the Most High, all whose decrees are authoritative and absolute, equitable and holy, "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." There can be no appeal to any other tribunal ; the decision of this judgment will irreversably fix our condition.

It is a *great* throne, which points out the magnitude and extent of the judgment to be then made. What God calls great is truly so. How great the judgment of that day, when all called great in this world bows before it: when apostate angels, who sinned before our world was, and all the generations, and tribes, and nations of the whole earth, through successive ages, are summoned before it, and which the glorious heavenly host, cherubim and seraphim, angels and archangels, surround! How great, when the sentence of him who sits upon it shall determine the final and everlasting state of millions upon millions of immortal beings!

It is a *white* throne, emblematic of its purity and uprightness. There can be neither partiality nor error in its decisions. There is no fear of consequences to turn the Judge aside from the path of strictest justice, and no bribery nor desire of the favour of any creature to bias him. The judgment of God is "according to truth. For there is no respect of persons with God." Now men speak much against the hardness and severity of God's requirements; but the conscience of every one judged will in that day so accord with the sentence pronounced, that even the condemned shall be silent in their own behalf.

O my brethren, often realize the circumstances of that day! Let us place before our eyes that great event, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him," and dwell often in our thoughts and meditations on that period, when "he shall sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations." You and I shall be there, and the preaching and the hearing of this very sermon shall be one of those things which will then testify for or against us.

2. THE JUDGE SEATED ON IT.

"I saw him that sat upon it."

"Who is this King of glory?" Who is this most worthy Judge eternal? It is our Lord Jesus Christ. The Scriptures frequently speak of him as presiding over all the stupendous scenes of this day. (Mark viii. 38; Matt.

xxv. 31.) "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." (John v. 22.) The throne of judgment is therefore called "the judgment-seat of Christ." (Rom. xiv. 10 ; 2 Cor. v. 10.) And he it is who shall be seated on this great white throne.

O how different from his first coming? Then he was shut out of human dwellings ; born in a stable ; a weak and helpless babe in his virgin-mother's arms : cradled in a manger ; subject to his parents ; brought up as a carpenter ; despised and rejected of men. Then he was a man of sorrows, not having where to lay his head. Then he was himself tried, judged, condemned, spit upon, nailed to a cross, crucified with thieves, and laid in the grave. This he submitted to : this he underwent for you, for me, that we might, through his sufferings for us, escape jndgment, condemnation, shame, and everlasting contempt.

But now how changed? He appears infinitely more glorious by the contrast of that humiliation to which, in his love and pity for man's redemption, he submitted. He now is manifested in his true and proper character, as "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person." His face shining as the sun ; myriads of angels attending upon him, the whole universe waiting to hear the decisions of his lips, and that voice which is to fix for ever the destiny of man.

O lover of Jesus ! think of this, and take courage. That being in whom thou hast trusted, whom thou hast made thy righteousness, whose Spirit thou hast received, who is thy Redeemer and thy Saviour : He, He is Judge of all the earth. Thou hast confessed Him here, He will confess thee there.

O despiser of Jesus ! tremble and be alarmed. This is he whom thou art rejecting ; this is he whom thou slightest. O agree with him quickly. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." (Psalm ii. 12.)

3. THE EFFECT OF HIS APPEARANCE.

"From his face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them."

There is a sublimity and awful magnificence in these ideas, that surpass our loftiest thoughts. Oh what will be the reality! The words shew the entire dissolution of the present fabric of the world. In the language of St. Peter, it is "the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat . . . . the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." For thousands of years this earth has been the abode of sinners. Every kingdom, every inheritance, every habitation, and every possession, is stained and dyed with sin; all below is contaminated and polluted with that which, in the sight of God, is more abominable than the plague or poison. How vile is sin, which pollutes all it touches!

But if the material world, in which men have sinned, be dissolved,—if even "the very garment spotted with the flesh" must be destroyed, O where shall the sinner himself appear? What will become of the ungodly? My beloved brethren, these are the grand realities; all other concerns are trifles.

Alas, we spend our thoughts and cares on adorning our houses and filling them with goods, and beautifying and perfecting them; forgetting that the end of all things is at hand, forgetting that all shall be burnt up and consumed, in the great fire which shall destroy this earth, and all the things which are therein. Let us learn lessons of moderation and contentment, and never make this world our home and inheritance; but "use the world so as not abusing it, and make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting habitations." (Luke xvi. 9.)

Such, my brethren, is the throne of judgment, the Judge seated upon it, and the effect of his appearance: the great realities which so deeply concern every one of us.

## II. THE ASSEMBLY GATHERED BEFORE THE JUDGE.

The whole human race will then be gathered before Him. "We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." We may consider this assembly as consisting of the living and the dead.

1. Those LIVING on the earth shall then be judged.

St. John does not, in this passage, mention the wicked living, for he is speaking of the judgment of the dead at the close of the millennium ; after the destruction of the living wicked by fire from heaven (v. 9) ; but we know that "all nations shall be gathered before the Son of man."

St. Paul says, respecting the living righteous, "Behold, I shew you a mystery ; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed ; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump ; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible."

So again speaking of what shall happen, "as it regards Christians," he says, "We which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep.....The dead in Christ shall rise first.....then we, which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them, in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."

As it regards the wicked also, millions will be living on the face of the earth, just before the time of this general judgment. Satan will "deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth :" the number of the deceived will be incalculably great "as the sand of the sea." They will be as full of worldly schemes, and plans, and wickedness, as now ; as full of enmity against God and his truth ; and in a moment the last great "fire" shall "come down from God out of heaven," and kindle the tremendous flame which shall destroy this lower world.

O brethren, think of that day ! Most likely the day of Christ will find you as you are now ; unless God, in his marvellous mercy, convert you. You have often thought of repenting, but you have not yet repented ; and of

amending, but have not yet amended: and if it go on so—Oh, if death and judgment were now to burst on you, where would you be! Would you be taken to heaven, or cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death? Are you ready and prepared for the coming of the Son of God?

2. Those numbered with the DEAD will then be collected and judged.

Our text expressly mentions the dead, small and great; "and the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them." We learn hence, that all classes of society appear in judgment; all places give up their dead.

Every class in society, whatever the age be, from the infant to the aged Methuselah: and every rank, from the beggar by the way-side to the mightiest monarch on his throne—without exception—all shall appear in judgment: the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the wise and the unwise, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, without reserve, and without one exception, all shall be judged. The murderer and his victim, the oppressor and the oppressed, the master and the servant, shall face each other again, and all stand in one awful judgment before the Holy Jesus. Those distinctions which men have so eagerly thirsted after, will for ever vanish, or rather, if they have ministered to sin, will heighten and aggravate the woe of that day. The treasures which wicked men have amassed, in the belief that those riches would secure them against evil, become the very things which will add to their load of misery. Their "gold and silver is cankered" and "the rust of them shall be a witness against" them, and "shall eat their flesh as it were fire." Their very pleasures "have nourished their hearts as for a day of slaughter." O brethren, whatever be your wishes, or your fears, or your terrors: whatever be your unbelief, or contempt, or neglect, there and then you must appear.

Then every "place" will give up its tenants. The

"sea" in all its unfathomable depths, withholds not one of the dead. A whole world was once drowned, when upon "those disobedient, in the days of Noah," God brought in the flood upon the world of the ungodly: the armies of Pharaoh were swallowed up in those depths, they too shall re-appear—not as pursuing the terrified people of Israel, but as themselves under a more tremendous terror than when the waves rushed back upon them, and they were overwhelmed in the Red Sea. Yes, and all the countless multitudes that since have found a grave in the great deep, not one of them shall be wanting. "Death too," however it may have taken its prey, in whatever varied forms it may have come on the sons of men, shall give up its captives. "Hell," also, the place of departed spirits, shall no longer detain its imprisoned tenants. Reunited to their bodies, the whole man, body and soul, shall be brought together to judgment.

See the vast assembly! it is not of one country, but every country: it is not one generation, but every generation: it is not the eight hundred millions now living on earth, but the millions of millions that have existed, from the first Adam, to the last born of the human race. They shall all in the course of the great and awful day of the Lord, be gathered. They shall all stand before the throne of judgment. Methinks they attend in solemn pause and breathless interest, the movements of the great Judge! What a scene then will be unfolded, in which you and I shall not be spectators only, but parties deeply concerned.

O sinners, unconverted, worldly, careless sinners, what will be your state then? All your high looks will be for ever abashed; all your hard speeches against God's truth for ever silenced; all your careless indifference for ever removed. All your worldly successes and advantages, instead of being your glory and your security, are your distress and your everlasting shame. O what would you in that day give for the time which you now have! Sinners on a death-bed cry out for a day more, for an hour more, that they have time to repent, and attend to the one

thing needful— their salvation : what will their desire be, for a day, or an hour, when all that they feared is come upon them ; " when their fear cometh as desolation, and their destruction as a whirlwind." You, my brethren, have that time now ; use it now as in the great day of judgment you will wish that you had done.

O you who trust in Christ, and love him ; this will be the great day of your joy and triumph : this the day that will complete your happiness. The Judge is your friend ; all that troubled you will be for ever done away. You shall enter the joy of your Lord.

O my beloved people, let me entreat you, as your real friend ; let me beseech you, as one who must himself give account of every sermon he preaches : let me entreat you, as one earnestly longing over you in the bowels of Jesus Christ,—to join without delay the despised flock of Christ, to sacrifice every thing, rather than your soul's salvation.

## SERMON VIII.

### THE JUDGMENT-DAY.

REVELATION XX. 11—13.

*And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away: and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it! and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.*

From these striking words we proposed to point your attention to four things: 1. The Judge upon the throne; 2. The assembly gathered before him: 3. The opening of the books: and 4. The judgment itself. We entered into the two former heads. Under the Judge on the throne, we dwelt on the throne of judgment, the judge seated on it, and the effect of his appearance; in reference to the assembly gathered before him, we viewed them under the two aspects of the living and the dead.

We left off at this point, the dead raised and gathered before the great Judge, and waiting his decision. Now let us consider,

3. The opening of the books, and

4. The judgment itself.

The proceedings of that judgment will commence with

## III. THE OPENING OF THE BOOKS.

"And the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life."

You may remark that there are books in general, and a particular book.

There are BOOKS IN GENERAL. The expression is figurative, denoting the accurate register of all our talents and opportunities, and of all our thoughts, and words, and works. But let us endeavour to illustrate this statement.

There is the BOOK OF GOD'S HOLY LAW. This, which contains the rule of judgment, it may be presumed, will be first opened. It has been already laid before men. Its main directions are to love "the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and to love thy neighbour as thyself," but it calls for perfect and entire obedience, without one omission; "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." (James ii. 10.) A perfect pattern of obedience was given in the life of Christ, and the law is so just and reasonable, its requirements are so clearly our duty, and tend so to promote our happiness, that disobedience is without excuse. If we say that we are unable to keep it, that very plea is our condemnation. Unable supremely to love thy Creator, thy chief benefactor! unable to love thy neighbour as thyself! O how great thy sinfulness! How utterly indefensible that plea! How self-condemnatory that excuse! Besides, the Spirit was provided in Christ, for thy obedience, and thou mightest have received it, hadst thou really sought it.

There is then the book of PROVIDENCE.

This comprehends the various talents entrusted to us, of whatever kind; whether ability of understanding, or wealth of substance, or influence of condition, or strength of body. It includes all the advantages which we have enjoyed from our earliest years; our birth, our baptism,

our education in a christian country, and the knowledge imparted and stored up for future usefulness in life : the Christian friends who counselled us, the sermons and the sacraments of the church. The book of providence records all the opportunities which we have had, whether improved or neglected : and all the seasons in which we might have prayed and read the Scriptures. It then marks down the patience, and forbearance, and long-suffering of God, his waiting long for our repentance, and the various affecting calls and awakening incidents, the sudden deaths, the touching sermons, the afflictions, and losses, and every thing else that God in his goodness designed and sent, to lead you to repentance : and the way in which these have been met by you. O how will you be astonished at your hardness of heart, amidst so many things calculated to rouse and awaken you !

In the book of SATAN'S ACCUSATION, behold another fearful register ! He is always, by his innumerable agents of evil, present with men, and noting down their doings. There is no place so secret, but he can be there—no work of darkness so hidden, but he with malignant joy observes it, and takes account of it. You may have long ago forgotten, he never forgets. His name is Adversary, his office is "the Accuser of the brethren, which accused them before our God day and night." (Rev. xii. 10.) He will enumerate the sins to which he seduced and tempted you, and every aggravating circumstance of each, of all ; and O what au unexpected, what a lengthened catalogue will he have to produce !

The BOOK OF CONSCIENCE will also be there. Conscience now soon loses sight of what is past ; it is also apt to slumber, and it becomes blinded and seared by custom in sinning. But the great and terrible scenes of the day of judgment will effectually awaken conscience. Times of alarm have often this effect, even in this world. When Joseph's brethren fell into trouble, their conscience, which, as far as appears, had slept for many years, was suddenly roused, the sale of their brother to be a slave rose up afresh

in all the horrors of a guilty conscience ; and, when nothing seemed to lead them to it, "they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear ; therefore is this distress come upon us." The book of conscience does now record all those secret sins which you may have securely kept from all your fellow-creatures ; every secret impurity, every hidden work of dishonesty, and every slander meditated or uttered in private ; but the writing is like that which remains invisible till it be brought to something that discovers it ; the day of judgment will exhibit legibly all the secret records, and your own eyes will be enlightened clearly and fully to behold all your life distinctly. If now even the enlightened conscience of the believer testifies in his heart, mine iniquities "are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me," (Psalm xl. 12.) what an accumulated multitude of sins will conscience in that day unveil !

Another book is that of HUMAN TESTIMONY : and this either that of good men or of bad. Good men must be witnesses in that day against those whom they counselled, instructed, and warned in vain. Enoch and Noah will have to testify against the ungodly world before the flood : Lot against the wicked men of Sodom : Elijah and Micaiah against Ahab : and all the faithful ministers of Christ will have to give testimony how their message was received, and of some, alas, they must "give account with grief, and not with joy." On the other hand, there will be the mutual accusations of sinners against sinners : of companions and associates against others. This is also a tremendous book. The wicked father accuses the wicked son, and the son recriminates against his father : the wicked husband testifies against the wicked wife, and the wife against the husband : the wicked master against the wicked servant, and the servant against the master. And their testimony embraces all injuries received, all duties neglected, all the want of religion in the family, all neglect of God in

the house, and in the daily occupations. Indeed every part of the earth will have a testimony respecting us. Do not such places, such houses, such rooms as have been the scenes of sin, recal the sin to your mind? In the language of scripture, "The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it."

One more book comprehending more than all others shall be added, the book of GOD'S PERFECT KNOWLEDGE. The omniscient eye of God has seen the whole of man. His knowledge is perfect.—"All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Heb. iv. 13.) No darkness hides from his eye, to whom "the darkness and the light are both alike." (Psalm cxxxix. 12.) All the inward parts of men, their thoughts, motives, and dispositions, as well as the outward effect in their words, and writings, and works, are recorded in this book. Nothing is forgotten, nothing overlooked, nothing screened, but as in the blaze of noonday, all is manifest and clear.

For these books are to be OPENED—to be laid open—to be visibly unfolded, that the equity of the Divine judgment may be universally cleared, and without exception acknowledged and confessed. O what should we now think, to have every secret sin blazoned abroad among all around us? The opening of these books is but the illustration of what our Lord says, "Nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest, neither any thing hid that shall not be known and come abroad." (Luke viii. 17.)

But do we not shut out all hope? In this way, shall not all perish? If indeed, these books were all, we might despair: but blessed be God, another book is produced at that day.

We notice then, in the next place, a PARTICULAR BOOK —"the book of life," in which book, if the name of any one be inscribed, he is not condemned, but is accepted.

There is a frequent allusion to this particular book in the preceding chapters. The Saviour promises "to him that overcometh, I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." (Rev. iii. 5.) He shews that all shall worship the

beast, "whose names are not written in the book of life. . . of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev. xiii. 8; xvii. 8.)

The figure seems taken from the list of freemen of a city. There is a list of freemen belonging to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. Their salvation has been decreed from eternity; they were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world." In the fulness of time God called them to himself, outwardly by his word, and inwardly by his Spirit: their names are on the Redeemer's Roll, and they have subscribed with their hands to the Lord. They have ventured their souls on the merits of Jesus; they are freely justified by his grace, and have received his Spirit, and brought forth that fruit of good living which distinguishes those who belong to Christ.

If their sins be written against them in other books, in this book they are all struck through with the marks of the Redeemer's blood. They were blotted out according to that gracious promise, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins," (Isaiah xliii. 25;) having believed, they obtained the blessedness of those to whom "God imputeth righteousness without works."

Yet even those whose names are in the book of life, are judged according to their works; for all are judged—"every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Every man's work shall be manifest, for the day shall declare it." (1 Cor. iii. 13.) Their judgment is necessary for two reasons; that the divine justice and equity in the discrimination made between them and the wicked, may be clearly seen, and that the proportion of their reward may be fixed. —Though saved by grace, there are yet different degrees of glory according to our fruitfulness in good works, for "he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." But here is the blessedness of the Book of Life—it furnishes a plea to answer the various charges which lie against us—it records as its first name, if I may so say, that Prince of Life, the Head of his people, who bore their sins in his own

body on the tree ; and by whose obedience they are accounted righteous ; who is the second Adam, through whose righteousness "the free gift comes upon all who believe in him unto justification of life. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. xv. 22.) All who believe in him, receive his Spirit, and are made thereby like him.

Brethren, may you then believe in Jesus ;—now enrol yourselves under him, and live to him, and so shall it be manifest that your names are in the book of life.

Think, we beseech you, think again and again, what you can possibly answer to all the charges written in God's book against you : apply to the Lord Jesus without delay, and never cease calling upon him for salvation ; continue to ask, to seek, and to knock, so shall you obtain satisfaction, through the manifest work of the Spirit on your hearts and in your lives, that you have received the forgiveness of your sins, and they will be no more remembered against you ; that you are clothed with that righteousness in which alone you can be accepted, and which is "unto and upon all them that believe ; and are made meet for the heavenly inheritance."

## IV. THE JUDGMENT ITSELF.

"The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, every man according to their works."

Notice its comprehensiveness ; its condemnation ; its justification.

Its COMPREHENSIVENESS is universal. It is not only a judgment for all men, but for all works also.

Every man is to be judged according to his works ; "we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." We must also be judged for all our works ; so the scriptures plainly state, "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil." (Eccles. xii. 14.) "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment,"

(Matt. xii. 36.) The whole of life, as recorded in the books which have been mentioned, will be brought under review, our thoughts and words and works, our relative duties, our tempers, our daily conduct. And let the self-righteous remember, that, if they rest on their own obedience, one single sin will condemn them. (James ii. 10.)

O fearful scrutiny! Sinners! how will you appear! Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? You *cannot answer him one of a thousand* of the charges brought against you. Think of this, ere it be too late, and seek the true refuge.

The CONDEMNATION of that day.

All who have not fled for refuge to Christ Jesus, and have no meetness for the heavenly inheritance, must evidently and without remedy be condemned. "There is none other name under heaven given whereby we must be saved"—and they have rejected that only name. See the wicked then clearly and fully manifested to be wicked. See them, without excuse, speechless before the throne. Now they begin to feel the force of that question they should have before considered. "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

It is a fearful thing to see a criminal at an earthly tribunal, tried for his life and condemned to death; to mark his pale face, his quivering lips, and his trembling limbs, and to hear the Judge pronounce the awful penalty; but all this is temporary and unimportant compared with this everlasting condemnation. The words of the Judge are full of terror, "Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. xxv. 41.) And the execution of the sentence immediately follows, "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Rev. xx. 15.)

O dread above every thing this condemnation! Fear nothing compared with this! Suffer any thing rather than undergo this! It comprehends all other evils, and with

the tremendous addition that it is at once evil without measure, or mixture, or end !

The JUSTIFICATION of the righteous in that day.

There are those owned as altogether righteous ; not a sin laid to their charge. Placed on the right hand, they hear the words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This is indeed the first work of this day, as we see in the beginning of this chapter, and in the 25th of St. Matthew's gospel.

But what is the ground of their justification ? How are they thus passed from death to life ; in what way is it possible for any sinful human being then to be justified, with such books opened, and by such an omniscient and righteous Judge ?

We have told you of the book of life ; but let us more distinctly shew the way of justification.

Tried by the law of God, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight. But God has devised a wonderful scheme of justice and mercy. "The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Rom. iii. 22, 23.) This way of salvation through faith in Jesus, God sends his ministers to proclaim. Men by nature wrapped up in unbelief, and worldliness, and love of sin, disregard, slight, and neglect this proclamation of grace.

But God's purposes of mercy are not incomplete, and therefore shall not be frustrated. He has a chosen people, who are made willing in the day of his power. To them he gives so largely of his blessed Spirit that they listen to his invitations, they believe his promises, they trust in the Lord Jesus, and they obtain the righteousness of God which is by faith.

Then the Spirit of Christ dwells in them, and filled with love and gratitude, they devote themselves, and all they

have, to God their Saviour, and their works of love prove their faith to be genuine, and manifest their character to be sincere.

Now to such there is a perfect deliverance from condemnation. There is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." In the words of our Lord, "He that believeth on him is not condemned." And as there is a deliverance from condemnation, so there is a complete justification in the sight of the whole world. The assembled universe may be challenged with the triumphant question, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth." (Rom. viii. 33.) Clothed with the perfect righteousness of the Divine Redeemer, all the malignity and subtilty of Satan cannot lay one sin against them, or discover one defect in that glorious robe.

Oh! my brethren, that you may be numbered among them! This is the end of all my labours among you, this my heart's desire and prayer for you. You hear the invitations of the gospel; you have the outward call of the word of God. Oh that you may be inwardly touched and called by the Divine Spirit; may lay these things seriously to heart, and determine to lose every thing rather than lose your soul; to do, to suffer everything rather than endanger your acceptance at the last.

Ever *remember this great account* that you must one day give at the judgment-seat of Christ, that every hour as it passes along tends to fix the character of your final and eternal condition. Often ask yourselves, how will this appear in the day of final account and retribution? is my course such as in the great, the last judgment will be approved?

Let every one truly *repent of sin*. This is St. Paul's practical application of this doctrine.—"God commandeth all men every-where to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." (Acts xvii. 30, 31.) "Except ye repent, ye shall all perish." Let us then often

try our ways and judge ourselves before that day arrive. So judging ourselves, we should escape being judged of the Lord. "Repent then, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Give up all sinful courses ; turn you every one from his evil ways.

Let the Christian, however, look at this day, not with dread but with believing hope—not with distrust, but with cheering expectation. Brethren, "God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. To them that look for him, he will appear the second time without sin unto salvation." The self-righteous and the unconverted may regard this as a day of terror ; the believer should not do so, but rather, "joyful through hope and rooted in charity," may anticipate this, as the day which will consummate his blessedness, and the course of all sin, restrain every iniquity in the prison of hell, and begin the unmingled reign and triumph of peace, and holiness, and happiness. O joyful day, when Christ "shall appear and we shall appear with him in glory !" O happy season, which shall for ever terminate darkness, and sin, and sorrow, and land us in his presence and kingdom, in whose "presence is fulness of joy !" The Christian may bless God that it will soon arrive. To him it is a joyful sound that his Lord says, "Surely I come quickly," and his heart replies, "Amen ! even so, come, Lord Jesus."

My brethren, I long that you should all be thus blessed. Why should you not ? Are the pleasures of sin for a little season, so precious as to recompence the loss of all this joy ? O surely it is not so. Then from henceforth be in earnest —make sure of this one point, SALVATION.

# SERMON IX.

## ETERNITY.

2 CORINTHIANS IV. 18.

*We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

The subject of eternity is one of those depths that are unfathomable by the human mind. At first view, it may seem easy to imagine a never-ending state of existence. This general notion is obvious: not so the realising view that shall comprehend with any distinctness its boundless extent, and its unutterable magnitude. With the astonishment of a new and before imperfectly apprehended subject of stupendous import, it will probably break after death upon the minds of the most prepared; and were death now to call others into its dark abode, and their spirits now to enter on the eternal scenes beyond it, to which they are hastening, O their alarm and consternation, as they saw the temporary good of this world vanishing, and with it the hope of heaven's eternal glory!

All have a general idea of eternity; what we all want is a more believing and realizing view of it. To die daily, to contemplate eternity daily, to live as strangers and pilgrims here, O how difficult! Your minister feels the difficulty. May the Divine Spirit help him at this time,

to open this subject to our mutual profit! May the words of the text be true of you and of me, "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal: but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Let us consider,

1. THE THINGS SEEN.
2. THE THINGS NOT SEEN.
3. ETERNITY.
4. OUR DUTY.
5. THE PRECIOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

## I. THE THINGS SEEN.

"The things which are seen are temporal."

We will notice,

The objects intended, and their transitory nature.

1. THE OBJECTS INTENDED. The things seen.

Not merely what is seen with the eye, but all that relates merely to this visible world. All that is in the world; all that it can do, either to hurt us, or to comfort us; or, to use the expression of Solomon, "All the works that are done under the sun." (Eccles. i. 14.) The varied pleasures of this world, which delight the heart, and fill it with mirth and gladness; its accumulated wealth, placing the possessor in independence of his fellow-creatures, or its honours, making him the object of esteem and general commendation, so that all speak well of him, —these are among the things seen. All the pursuits and labours which engage us day by day, of which Solomon says, "I looked on all the works my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do,"—these are things seen. Every intellectual improvement, the stores of human learning and wisdom, the knowledge of arts and science, trade and business, however valuable for this world,—they are also here included. Whatever is the object of sight and sense, and whatever the carnal mind desires for its present happiness, comes under its description. Then again all that distresses the mind, as it regards

these things, all sorrows and afflictions, losses and trials, however acutely we may feel them; or joys and prosperity, gains and blessings, however assured to us, are not to be omitted. In short, all the concerns and events of human life, the schemes of politicians, the revolutions of empires, the forms of government, the enterprises of merchants, the construction and government of cities and countries, the progress of science, the ordinary pursuits and speculations of trade, these are what we mean by the things seen. Nor, however necessary they may be for the present life, can they, to an immortal being like man, be looked at as things of main importance.

2. THEIR TRANSITORY NATURE. They are temporal. They are all for a season. However great or glorious, or necessary, or profitable, there is one stamp upon all—they are for a time only—soon they come to an end.

The monarch, surrounded with his court, environed with his guards, or shielded by the love of his people, must lay aside his crown, and give up his kingdom. The learned, with all the stores of the wisdom of ages, cannot ward off the stroke which will send him to a country where learning (apart from that which makes men wise to salvation,) avails nothing. The sensualist, who takes the utmost pains to delight and gratify a pampered body, must soon leave that body in the grave, the prey of the worms. The ambitious, who has made all obstacles yield to his advancement, and had many dependant upon him, must speedily enter alone, without one dependant, the eternal world.

Whatever good things we may, by wisdom and prudence, by art and contrivance, have gathered around us, if they be only this world's goods, we must soon part with all. Whatever evil things we may be burdened with, if we are Christians, those evils will soon pass away and be felt no more. The most comfortable dwelling that we can make for ourselves, is but a tent for a short stay, and not our real home; the most profitable business we can be engaged in, is but as a provision for a short journey; the best

situation we can have in this world, is a mere temporary seat in a pilgrimage.

Suppose a ship at sea has a dangerous leak, from which, as all the sailors know, the vessel must in a few hours sink in the great deep ; suppose a passenger to be so absurd as to spend all the time that remains in hanging his cabin with pictures, painting, beautifying, and adorning every part, and thinking of nothing but how his cabin shall be most admired by his fellow-passengers ; though the ship was filling with water, though the waves swept away one of the company after another, and at length entered his cabin : suppose he stopped not in his folly till he himself sunk with the vessel : you can see the madness of this ; but suppose the greater part of the crew were pursuing the same sort of conduct, some in one way and some in another, but all regardless of the coming shipwreck,—you justly say, it is incredible, such a thing never happened.

Look abroad in the world : what are men doing ? They are painting the cabin while the ship is sinking. Look into your own life,—what is it ? The wisest plan that ends merely in this world's glory, is like some petty ornament set up in the cabin of a sinking vessel. Nor is this all. Sin carries a sting beyond the grave. A satisfied lust in time, is the hell of eternity. "Thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things ; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented."

O my brethren, I feel myself the lethargic, the palsying, the deadening effect of this world's good, and long therefore to rouse myself as well as to awaken you. It is affecting to see how naturally we all tend to fill and satisfy our souls with the poor dirt of the perishing things of this world, instead of rising on eagle's wings to the ennobling and sublime things of eternity ; but death is coming, and it will show us what is temporal, and what is eternal, in a way beyond deception. It will strip us bare of all temporal things. It will pull off from us friends and relations, revenues and titles, honours and riches, and pleasures. Things but of one character will

follow us to another world, even those "things which are not seen and are eternal."

## II. THE THINGS NOT SEEN.

The things which are not seen are eternal.

Here also we will consider, the objects intended, and their enduring character.

1. THE OBJECTS INTENDED.

"Things which are not seen."

The Apostle means all those spiritual things with which as immortal beings we are chiefly concerned.

The God with whom we have to do: in whom we live, move and have our being: who is a spirit, and whom no human eye has seen. Yet is he about our path and about our bed, and spies out all our ways; his judgment of us is to us everything—his favour better than life, and his frown worse than death. His being and existence, as Father, Son and Holy Ghost, three persons in one God, is one of those great realities that are not seen.

The angelic host that surround his throne, and fly to execute his errands, who are ministering spirits ministering to the heirs of salvation, and our future companions iu the glory above are also among the great realities not seen by the eye of flesh.

Again, the accursed angels with their apostate chief, who "goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour," (1 Peter v. 8.) and who works in the children of disobedience, however much the wicked may ridicule his fearful power, and deny his very existence, yet the Bible account is trne; he does exist, and his existence, with that of legions under him, are among those realities which, though not seen, have the reality and fatal influence which the Bible ascribes to them.

The soul of man, as distinct from the body, is spiritual and immaterial, and therefore invisible. Man *sees* the body and can kill the body; the soul he sees not, it is beyond his reach, impervious to all external attack, and imperishable.

All that relates to this immortal soul, those holy disposi-

tions which are the fruits of the Divine Spirit, the work of faith, the patience of hope and labour of love, in which the Christian abounds, must be included ; though man sees not the secret principles, God does, and they survive the death of the body, and are like seed that grows and flourishes in the harvest of futurity. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord ! for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." (Rev. xiv. 13.)

And, on the other hand, all those sins in which the wicked delight, follow them also as a seed of a miserable futurity. Much would they wish to be free from the recollection ; but the sin of lying follows the liar, and the sin of thieving follows the thief, and add to and form the bitter anguish of their ruin.

But more especially the great realities of sin and hell, holiness, and heaveu—the regions of future woe—the realms of endless bliss—the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, and the paradise of eternal joy and glory—where is "the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal," (Rev. xxii. 1.) —and the "tree of life, and the throne of God and the Lamb, and no more curse, and fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore, these are "the things not seen" on which our eye should be fixed. For mark—

2. THEIR ENDURING CHARACTER.

"They are eternal."

What an authoritative stamp is here ! A piece of paper may be of little worth in itself, but let the paper have the signature and the stamp of the Bank of England, and it may be worth thousands of millions of property. Now there is this stamp of eternity put on all things not seen, which we have brought before you ; and this gives them an importance which language fails to express.

God is the eternal, immortal, invisible, and only wise God. He is properly "from everlasting to everlasting," without beginning as well as without end. Angels and fallen spirits and human beings have had a beginning, but they have no end of their existence, and their varied works

affect their eternal condition; evil works terminating in endless woe, and good works in future and eternal bliss.

Not to enter, however, too largely on these things, mark only the eternity of the regions of future woe and bliss.

The unseen regions of future woe have the stamp of eternity upon them; this is their peculiar characteristic. Under whatever term you find these miserable regions mentioned in the scripture, a note of eternity is in some part or other affixed to the description. It is called by that most fearful of all terms—"the wrath of God:" (Eph. v. 6.) but then it has this tremendous addition, it is called an abiding wrath, and the wrath to come. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John iii. 36.) "Flee from the wrath to come." It is compared to a worm feeding on us, the perpetual gnawing of a guilty conscience; but then it is a worm that "never dies." (Mark ix. 44.) It is at other times described as a fire (Isaiah lxvi. 34.) a furnace of fire, (Matt. xiii. 42.) a lake of fire, (Rev. xix. 20.) but it is a "fire that never shall be quenched," (Mark ix. 44.) and is called "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. xxv. 41.) Or, if it be named as a prison, (1 Peter iii. 19.) it is a prison from which men never go out; (Matt. v. 25, 26.) or as darkness, but it is "the blackness of darkness for ever," (Jude 43.) reserved for the ungodly. The burning (Isaiah xxx. 34.) is "everlasting burnings." (Isaiah xxxiii. 11.) The torment is an everlasting torment; "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." (Rev. xx. 10.) It is not to me pleasant to speak, nor to you pleasant to hear these things; but I must be faithful; and happy are you, if by hearing them you are so warned as for ever to escape them.

On the other hand, the unseen realms of future bliss have, under their varied descriptions, always attached to them the same mark of eternity. If heaven be described as a kingdom, (Matt. v. 3.) it is also styled an "everlasting kingdom." (2 Peter i. 11.) If it be a crown, it is a

"crown that fadeth not away," (1 Peter v. 4.) or glory, (Rom. v. 1.) it is "eternal glory;" (1 Peter v. 10.) or an inheritance, it is "incorruptible," as well as "undefiled;" (1 Peter i. 4.) or a house, it is a "house eternal in the heavens;" (2 Cor. v. 1.) or salvation, it is "eternal salvation;" (Heb. v. 9.) or life, it is "life everlasting." (John iii. 16.)

But I pause in my description : and before I conclude, would address your consciences.

My brethren, you stand on the margin of eternal things : the immense ocean of eternity is stretched out before you ; you must soon embark upon it. Time, how short ! life, what a vapour ! "As for man, his days are as grass ; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth ; the wind passeth over it and it is gone." (Psalm ciii. 15, 16.) he may die in a thousand different ways each hour. Anything is strong enough when commissioned by your God to bring you to death, and launch you on this boundless sea of eternity. Here is one striking character of death ; it lifts up the hangings that hide eternity, and it shews us the reality of what we now see not ; death is in this view the entrance upon eternity.

On your life, then, thus uncertain, depends a happy or a miserable eternity. I appeal to your understanding as men, to your conscience as accountable beings, to your reason as reasonable beings, follow your true interests. Shall the tenant at will thus needlessly provoke and offend to the uttermost that landlord on whom he is wholly dependent ? Shall the sailor on the mast-top fall asleep while the stormy ocean tosses the vessel to and fro with its swelling waves ? then, much less should we on the brink of eternity offend our God, and be unconcerned about our souls.

O never forget there are multitudes that shall everlastingly perish. Your Saviour has declared it in the plainest terms : "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat." (Matt. vii. 13.) Remember the possibility of being de-

ceived—"there is a way that seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Prov. xvi. 25.) And oh! if deceived, how fatal is the mistake. How terrible the reflection, 'I looked for heaven, and behold I am lost, for ever lost in hell!'

Improve then, to the uttermost, all the means which God has bestowed for your conviction and conversion:—the word of truth, constant prayer, self-examination, and weekly sabbaths. O rest not till you see your interests for eternity clearly and surely established. This is, this must be true wisdom. That is not wisdom which regards merely things seen. The rich man in the parable whose lands brought forth abundantly, was wise enough as to this world; he laid his plans judiciously in earthly things—but the Bible says, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." (Luke xii. 20.)

What is called wisdom in this world, at the best is but the wisdom of one who speuds all in providing so well for his journey to a distant country, where he has to live the rest of his days, that he arrives a bankrupt at the journey's end. Often ask yourselves, 'Am I provided for eternity? What treasures have I for that heavenly country?' Let us not live in waste here, and starve for ever. Most men are occupied in thinking how they shall live in the world; it should be, how they shall live "out of it," in eternity.

O how Satan the great deceiver imposes on men; they take a pebble for a pearl, they prefer a flint to a diamond, they choose time before eternity, and strut about in the momentary delusion, as if adorned with real wealth and glory.

But, my beloved brethren in Christ, let the consideration that eternity is at hand, calm your mind and remove all your anxieties about this world. The only material question, 'Where shall I leau my head, and lodge my soul, and find my home for ever,' is to you satisfactorily answered. "The Lord is the strength of your heart, and your portion for ever." (Psalm lxxiii. 26.)

## SERMON X.

### ETERNITY.

2 CORINTHIANS IV. 18.

*We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

WE proposed to consider, 1. The things seen : 2. The things not seen : 3. Eternity : 4. Our duty : 5. The preciousness of Christ. We have considered the two former heads, pointing out under each head the objects intended, and the character of those objects. There remains to consider,

3. ETERNITY.
4. OUR DUTY REGARDING IT.
5. THE PRECIOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

### III. THE NATURE OF ETERNITY.

Here is our great difficulty. We can only describe it according to our present very limited and imperfect views, and can rather say what it is not, than what it is. For instance,

"It surpasses all description." Human language fails utterly to convey the full notion of eternity. Whatever is spoken of it, is far less than it is. Thus we talk of the ages of eternity, but there are properly no such æras, as ages in eternal existence ; we talk of thousands of years

past in eternity, but there are no years to mark the parts of a never-ending state.

"It transcends human understanding." It cannot be weighed; for what can be placed in the opposite scale of the balance against eternity! It cannot be measured. There is some proportion between a second of time and millions of years? but what shall measure eternity. Our thoughts are vast and boundless; they can imagine worlds upon worlds, filled with happy beings, peopling unknown regions of the immeasurable universe; but our thoughts themselves are baffled and staggered, they become confounded and darkened, when they attempt to measure eternity.

"It is being without end." Nothing shall put an end to our existence. God, who can, will not. His world cannot pass away; and in every threatening of eternal woe, in every promise of eternal bliss,—that word on which the whole creation is suspended, is pledged for our endless existence. Man cannot destroy his own life there, or that of his fellow-creatures. Nor is there change or return; when once we are launched on that ocean, we can never begin again, never return to re-act life.

"Eternity is existence going on without diminution." There is no spending or wasting of eternity. In this life, every day and every hour shortens it: we have less to live from having lived so long; but it is not so in eternity, which is not marked by days and years. Millions of what we now call years and ages shall pass, and yet none of eternity shall be diminished; it shall make no difference in the immeasurable length which is yet to come. The sorrows of the lost will still be to come—an everlasting night overshadows them. The joys of the saved will still be to come—an everlasting morning refreshes them.

Once more—"all comparisons fall short" of a true resemblance. You may conceive this place of worship full of grains of sand, and one grain taken away in a million of years and the space of time this would require! We may conceive the whole earth as one vast globe of sand, and one grain taken away in a million of years, and the

extent of ages this would require! We may conceive the vast ocean, in all its extent and depth, and the removal of a drop each million of years, and the space this would take! You may put all these together, and accumulate them again and again, but after reaching the utmost stretch of comparison, you are hardly beginning eternity, and are not at all nearer its termination; for eternity is an ocean without a bottom and without a shore. O then think, we beseech you, think often, deeply, and most seriously of eternity! Can it be, that one who is to dwell in it has never thought of it with any earnestness!

## IV. OUR DUTY WITH REGARD TO ETERNITY.

"Look not at things seen—Look at things not seen." There is apparently a contradiction in these directions. How can I not look at the things which I see? How can I look at the things which I cannot see? There is an eye, however, that can make worldly things disappear, and see Him that is invisible, and behold and stedfastly gaze upon spiritual and eternal things—we mean the eye of faith.

This duty concerns the view we should take of things temporal and things eternal—not to look at the one, and to look at the other.

As TO THINGS TEMPORAL, look not so at them, as to set your affections upon them, or to esteem them beyond their just value. Make them not your treasure. Let not your reward be upon earth.

If you lose them, be not anxious or distressed at the loss. The Apostle says, "We are troubled on every side, but not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair: persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed....The time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

(1 Cor. vii. 29—31.) This is the spirit in which we should view this world. Let eternity, with its infinitely more important concerns, keep us from giving too much time to earthly objects, being too anxious in the pursuit of them, or too overjoyed in the possession of them, or any thing like the vain thought, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years."

All earthly things should be regarded by us, not for what they are in themselves, but as they are a help or hindrance to our happiness in eternity. If we view them through the medium of an eternal state, we shall then see them in their just proportions.

As to ETERNAL THINGS.

Look at them, so as DULY TO ESTIMATE THEM. Calculate, if you can, what is included in the immortality of the soul: weigh the whole world against it, and it outweighs it all. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul!" (Mark viii. 36.) Who can tell all the woe of having an immortal soul lost? Estimate again the eternity of God. Is there any end of his power and wisdom, of his holiness and truth, of his grace and love, of his possessions and dominions? Oh, to have this eternal God for your everlasting enemy, what an overwhelming evil! Oh, to have Him for your everlasting friend, what an unspeakable good? Or estimate the ruin of an eternity of future woe. Eternity is the hell of hell, and the horror of the lost. You complain of the various ills of life, you groan under its pain, you are distracted by its sufferings; and trying enough are the varied afflictions and troubles of this world: but these are all sent in mercy and grace, they are common to God's children; they are partial and mitigated evils; they come not together, they continue not long. What will it be to have the whole body and the whole soul tormented in unabating anguish for ever and ever! Or, once more, estimate the exceeding and eternal weight of glory: eternity is the heaven of heaven, and the joy of the saved—to be happy for ever. O calculate this in its length

and breadth, and depth, and height ; and all other things, in comparison, will sink into insignificance and nothingness.

Look at eternal things, so as EARNESTLY TO FOLLOW YOUR HIGH PRIZE. The Apostle accounted all but loss for this. "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before. . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." What have you to fly from ? A destruction worse than that of the burning cities of the plain. "Escape then, for thy life !" What have you to obtain ? Every thing that is excellent and glorious, and that for ever. Oh, then, bend your whole powers to this point—to lay hold on eternal life and glory !

Look at eternal things so as to be FILLED with them. Their surpassing greatness should engage the whole attention of the soul. The eye should be fixed, intently fixed upon them : the heart supremely occupied with them and the whole life regulated by them.

How may this be done ? consider lastly,

## V. THE PRECIOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

It is only in the glass of eternity that we can properly estimate the unspeakable value of a Saviour ; and may it please God the Holy Ghost so to take of the things of Christ as to enable me to set them forth, and thus may He draw your hearts to the Lord Jesus.

My brethren, all have sinned. "The wages of sin is death," death eternal. God is holy, and God is true. His word cannot fail. He is just and cannot acquit the guilty. Here is your state. You are sinful ; you are on the very brink of eternity, and that eternity is a never-ceasing flow of wretchedness to the unpardoned. You are lost then ; you are lost for ever without Christ. There is not a ray of hope from any other quarter.

But in Christ Jesus the gloom is dissipated, that Sun of Righteousness with cheering beams, sheds light and life, joy and peace, and the full assurance of hope all around. He came, he lived, he died ; he rose again and thus com-

pleted our redemption, delivering us from the sentence of the law, the penalty of death, and the prison of hell, and obtaining for us the Holy Spirit, free justification, the adoption of sons, the gift of holiness, and the hope of glory. "This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son: he that hath the Son hath life, and he that not the Son hath not life."

We have then the word of him who inhabiteth eternity, who is from everlasting to everlasting, who is the God and Father of all for ever and ever, that in Christ Jesus there is a security for eternity. There is a solid basis on which you may fix your foot and say, "I shall not be moved." Take, then, I beseech you, your stand on the rock of ages. Win Christ and be found in him, and you shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

Oh! if you have right views of eternity, how will you value Christ! How does the shipwrecked sailor, clinging with a last grasp to the wreck of the sinking vessel, value the life-boat which pushes through the opposing waves, reaches him in his danger, and rescues him from destruction! How does the inmate of the burning dwelling, surrounded with devouring flames, feel towards him who at the risk of his own life breaks through all difficulties, seizes him in his arms, and brings him to safety; and shall not we value that Saviour, who at so great a cost, rescues us from an infinitely greater danger, and brings us to an infinitely higher and fuller blessedness? Has he said, "I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me!" (John xvii. 24.) Have we been "raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus?" (Ephes. ii. 6.) And shall not he whose love is thus unparalleled and beyond all imagination, be unspeakably dear to us?

The cities of refuge were places of safety for the manslayer; and, surely, as they ran for their lives, the very sight of the distant towers and walls animated their steps, and they never rested till they reached and entered the place of

security. Let us too fly for refuge to the hope set before us in Christ Jesus.

Imagine the feelings of Noah in the ark ; when the heavens gathered black with clouds, and all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, and the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth, covering the highest mountains, and he found his prepared ark safely bearing him up over the universal deluge ! Did he not value this ark ! Was it not precious to him ! and shall not Christ be precious, who shelters us from a more tremendous deluge, and carries us in safety from a world of sin, to a new world wherein dwelleth righteousness. If you know your danger, if you know your refuge, here indeed will be that invaluable good, to obtain which you will gladly part with all things else. "To you which believe, he is precious."

O come to the Saviour. I fail in my whole ministry if I gain not this point, to lead you in secret retirement, in holy determination of will, in sweet reliance of mind, in ardent affection of heart, to venture your everlasting interests on God's faithful promises in Christ Jesus, and to make Him your righteousness, and Him your strength.

O thou eternal Father, draw by thy Spirit the sinner's heart to Christ ! Thy Son hath said, "No man cometh to me except the Father draw him." O send now thy Holy Spirit, and let this be the day of thy power ; and now may some poor sinners here be made willing to come to thee !

Suffer me to plead with you, yet further, by adding some practical directions arising out of this subject.

Every day PREPARE FOR ETERNITY. This is the great concern of life. Say not you are so busy, you have no time. By this you only show your unbelief and ignorance. What business is so great as that it may set aside concern for your salvation ! Why was life given you ? that you might attain a blissful eternity. Why is life continued ? that you "may grow up unto him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." (Eph. iv. 15.)

For this you were sent here. For this, all time is allowed you, and God spares you from day to day. O then neglect not this oue great business of life. Remember, as you go out of time, so you enter, and so you continue in eternity. Whatever then thy hand findeth to do, in the great work given thee to do, "do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." May God then impart his Spirit, day by day, to renew your faith and repentance, and enable you to live each day as if the last. One of old had proclaimed daily in his ears, "Remember, thou art mortal;" but let it rather ever sound in your ear—"Remember, that thou art immortal, and immortal either in woe or bliss, according as thou art saved or lost." O then "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," for now you may have a mighty helper, even God himself, who "worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure."

ABIDE ALWAYS IN CHRIST JESUS. This is one of his last directions to his Disciples. "Abide in me." This is the only ark in which a sinner can safely and securely pass over the universal ocean of a vast eternity. O my brethren, enter without delay this ark, I beseech you. God grant I may not beseech you in vain. Noah was a preacher of righteousness; he preached to a whole world, and but eight souls entered into the ark. My brethren, be warned by all the past history of the church. You know you must pass into the eternal world. The time is rapidly approaching, here you have no continuing city; you must soon be removed, and the earth itself be removed; there is however a rock to be attained in this world, which is immoveable in eternity itself, even Christ Jesus. O that I could see you all safely fixed on that rock, believing in Jesus, and abiding in Him! Then let the heavens and earth pass away, let the "hills be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea," you need fear nothing, but exclaim in triumph, "The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge."

Learn on earth THE BLESSED EMPLOYMENT OF ETERNITY. You must here be made meet for its holy occupations : to enjoy God as your portion and happiness ; to do his will only ; to praise him unceasingly, and to seek only his glory.

I add one more direction. SEEK also to RESCUE YOUR FELLOW MORTALS from eternal ruin. The world accuses Christians of being too busy with other people's religion, and scornfully asks 'Cannot you let people alone ?' I would that the world's accusations were just. Let people alone ! yes, let the sleeper in the burning house sleep on till the flames awake him, though you see his danger ! let the drowning man, become insensible in the water, sink, and never reach out a hand to draw him to the shore ! My brethren, we are too insensible about each other's souls. We all say too much as the first murderer did, "Am I my brother's keeper ?" Christians, I beseech you stir up yourselves to seek the salvation of all around you. "If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

# SERMON XI.

## HELL.

MATTHEW XXV. 41.

*Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

Could I, my Christian friends, in faithfulness to your souls, have passed by, in the course I am now preaching, the subject of the present lecture. I should have rejoiced to have omitted it. But to sound an alarm, to utter the warning voice, to give notice of coming danger, is an essential part of ministerial fidelity and love.

Did we see men in geueral overwhelmed with the terrors of everlasting ruin, distressed with anxious apprehension, and sinking into despondency under the dread of hell, we might forbear to dwell upon a subject, in such a case uninviting and unsuitable; then it would be our more agreeable office to proclaim the riches and greatness of the salvation provided in Jesus for those ready to perish. But when we see men, almost without exception, dreading nothing less than the future punishment, wholly secure and unconcerned, regardless and careless of the miseries that are coming upon them; then how guilty must the minister be who warns not the wicked, who shuns to declare the counsel of God; that "upon the wicked, God

shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest, this shall be the portion of their cup." (Psalm xi. 6.)

It is not in the language of severe and hard denunciation that I desire to bring so fearful a subject before you, but in that of tenderest compassion and earnest desire to promote your salvation. I am a poor sinner, even as you : I, by nature, am "a child of wrath" as you ; if I hope to escape, it is only by sovereign grace and mercy in Christ Jesus, and by daily flying to that Saviour who has delivered us from the wrath to come ; and, having myself hope in him, can I but long to see you all safe in this refuge? "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." I cannot but fear that there must be before me some who are in imminent peril. O that such may this day be "snatched as brands from the burning !" O that preaching on this subject may warn some to "flee from the wrath to come," and may renew, in God's children, the feelings of gratitude for their own deliverance !

Christians, lift up your hearts in prayer, that a blessing may be upon us from the Lord this day.

Let us consider—

1. THE PERSONS TO BE PUNISHED.
2. THE CURSE WHICH LIES UPON THEM.
3. THE EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT TO BE ENDURED.

## 1. THE PERSONS TO BE PUNISHED.

We will notice three characters ; the open sinner : the ungodly ; and the neglecters of Christ Jesus, which include the various classes of lost souls.

### 1. THE OPEN SINNER.

The Scriptures are very express on this point, and give us several catalogues, which should furnish all mentioned in them with a distinct and solemn warning of their fearful danger. Thus St. Paul tells the Corinthians, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards,

nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. vi. 9.) So the Apostle in a similar list to the Galatians, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal. v. 19.) So again he tells the Ephesians, (v. 5,) "No whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." A similar statement is made by St. John, "The fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Rev. xxi.)

Can any thing be more clear than these plain and affecting statements? Oh! if any of you are living in any of these sins, learn, we beseech you, your real danger.

2. The ungodly.

There are very many who have a highly fair, honourable, and respectable character before their fellow-creatures. They are upright in their dealings, moral and decent in their behaviour, and possibly no charge may justly lie against them for injuries done to others, and much praise may be due to them for their usefulness in society. They may pride themselves on their character, and had rather lose their property or their life itself, than their reputation for integrity and morality. Yet are these persons, with all this respectability before man, fearfully guilty before God. They are guilty of a crime which they perhaps never suspect, but which is in reality the most enormous crime of which a creature can be guilty—they are living as "without God in the world;" full of regard to man

opinion, wholly regardless of God's opinion ; fully alive to man's laws, wholly unconcerned about God's laws ; daily slighting and daily rebelling against that merciful Father, from whom they have received all their blessings, and who is profusely shedding, every day, bounties without number all around them. The crime of ungodliness is the iniquity which God lays to their charge. They would be just as upright in their dealings, and as kind and benevolent in their actions, if there were no God in the world. They seek not to do his will, and he "is not in all their thoughts." We do not under-value the importance, the respectability, and the nsefulness of such characters before men ; but if all this be done without any regard to God and his will and his glory, of such the Scripture says, "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." (Psalm ix. 17.) "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." (2 Thess. i. 7—9.) "Not every one that saith, Lord ! Lord ! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

Search then your hearts, and try your ways. Is the main bent of your mind to live to God and not to yourselves ?

3. Once more ; the NEGLECTERS OF CHRIST.

This is remarkably brought forward in that account of the judgment which immediately follows our text, Why are they bid to depart from Christ : He tells them : "for I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat : I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink ; I was a stranger and ye took me not in : naked and ye clothed me not, sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison,

and did not minister unto thee ? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." (Matt. xxv. 42—45.)

Observe, they never suspected the sins for which they are condemned. Those sins of omission which were not thought of by them as chargeable upon them, are the very things on account of which heaven is lost. The scripture is remarkable on this point, for its distinctness and repetition. Thus, in this chapter of Matthew xxv. 30, the sentence concerning the servant, who did not—observe you well—did not squander away, or waste his Lord's talents, but who did not improve it, is, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth:" and in Matt. vii. 19. there is a similar mode of expression. It is not the poisonous tree merely that is to be cut down, but "every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire." (Matt. iii. 10.) If the tree be barren, it is to be burned.

The true reception of Christ makes a man full of zeal and love. All who really trust in Christ, are men of grateful and devoted feelings. The love of Christ constrains them, "not to live to themselves, but to him who died for them." (2 Cor. vi. 15.) He that abides in Him "bears much fruit." Hence omitted duties become a decisive test of a neglected Saviour. And "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" It is the only way left for sinners to escape hell. "There is none other name given under heaven, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus. He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." It is therefore, obviously to all, clear from the word of God, that the neglecters of Christ shall perish for ever. Those "without Christ," as well as those "without God in the world," are by the scriptures described as "having no hope."

O affecting truths! Look diligently within, brethren; see whether any of these marks are upon you: and if so,

never rest, day nor night, till your soul escape from the overhanging storm of divine wrath. If the angel was urgent to Lot, when he had only to flee from the danger of a temporal ruin, O with what earnestness should we cry,—Escape for thy life! flee from the wrath to come!

But let us consider,

## II. THE CURSE WHICH LIES UPON THEM.

The expression, "*Ye cursed*," is full of meaning.

Let us consider, The curse itself; and, Its development.

1. THE CURSE ITSELF.

The language is materially varied from the parallel expressions addressed to the righteous; that is, "Ye blessed of my Father;" where the blessing is wholly attributed to the free love and rich grace of the Heavenly Parent. But to the wicked he speaks differently; he does not say, Ye cursed of God; but simply, "Ye cursed;" for sin is its own curse: it is our own disobedience that is the true root and substance of the curse. The law declares this curse; "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. (Gal. iii. 10.) The moment a man sins, he sows the seed of the curse, which will more assuredly spring up hereafter than the seed sown in the ground. The curse is upon the soul of every sinner. Though men perceive it not now, yet God's word abideth sure, it can never pass away. The sentence passed at the judgment is not, Be cursed; they are, through sin, already cursed, and therefore it is, Go, ye cursed."

Yet though, in this view, the curse springs from man's own sin, the evil arising from it, is through the just appointment of a Holy God, and is connected with his righteous wrath. The curse is his awful sentence, condemning the sinner to the full punishment of sin. This curse separates from the divine favour, communion, and blessing, and makes every thing in creation injurious and terrible to him under it. If "the wrath of a king be as messengers of death," what is the wrath of the King of

kings? If this wrath be kindled, who can stand before Him? How the prophet Nahum speaks on this subject! "The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence; yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him." (Nahum i. 5, 6.)

There is but one way of escape; "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse, being made a curse for us." (Gal. iii. 13. What then must be the situation of those to whom this way was proclaimed Sabbath after Sabbath, year after year, and they slighted it as of no moment, and they rejected the only Redeemer with the scornful words, "We will not have this man to reign over us," till there was no remedy. They are left under the curse, and that for ever.

Let us further notice,

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS CURSE.

The judgment day is the grand day of manifestation—showing what man and his doings are, and what God is, and for ever shutting the mouths of all who have spoken against God and his ways. "Behold the Lord cometh, with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed; and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." (Jude 14, 15.)

The scriptures often speak of this full manifestation of every thing in the last day. "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts." (1 Cor. iv. 5.)

We have already considered the opening of the books in the day of judgment; but if it be asked, How can there be time for such a display of all things? How can this display be manifest to all?

We reply, Nothing is impossible with God, nor have we any reason to think that the day of judgment is a

short period. The day of salvation has lasted many hundred years, and so may the day of judgment. What, if by the immediate operation of divine light and power, all the defects of our memory being removed, there be laid open to every man's recollection, at one glance, all the course of his past life,—and our memory be so quickened, restored, and strengthened, that all the thoughts, words, and works of our whole lives, are presented at once to our minds! What if all our past sins thus rush into the immediate view of the soul, and it be laid open to all the alarms of a conscience awakened to the full and ever present and terrible recollection of every committed sin! This is of itself enough to overwhelm and daunt the stoutest heart. This is a "worm that never dieth."

But this is not all. It is not merely by our own conscience that our past sins will thus be instantaneously and prominently seen,—they will also be thus visible to an assembled world. "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed: neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light." (Luke xii. 2, 3.) As in the case of the first murderer, Cain, "The Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him," (Gen. iv. 15;) so we may suppose there will be the marks of sin committed on earth, visible and obvious to every eye, on every lost soul.

And this manifestation of once secret and hidden sin shall be eternal, that thus the lost sinner may have stamped upon him through eternity, the equity of his final condemnation. None of the lost shall be able for one moment to speak against the purity and equity of that sentence which dooms them to eternal woe.

But this is a subject that requires illustration. Let us endeavour to trace out the developement of the curse still further.

First observe WHAT DISAPPEARS FROM THE SIGHT.

And here I speak not of grandeur, titles, riches, honours, though all these things will for ever have vanished: or

rather not have vanished; that is what the wicked would wish; but have changed to them their very nature, and become the causes of shame, and contempt, and everlasting sorrow. That title in which the wicked man gloried, will be his aggravated condemnation; those riches in the possession of which he trusted, nay boasted, will be his everlasting perdition.

But of these I speak not, but of those things in which you once confided as ground of hope: such as these:—All false rules of judgment respecting your state, for instance, that you were not worse than your neighbours, and that your hearts were still good; all the approbation of your fellow-creatures which led you to think that you were safe, all the examples of others around you from which you formed your sentiments of right and wrong; all the false appearance of good works which were good before man, but being done from mere worldly motives, such as desire of man's praise, regard to present and earthly good, and the like, were not good before God; all works of charity done to merit heaven, and entitle you to claim God's acceptance. These refuges of your own conceit, these superstructures of hay, straw, and stubble, will all be consumed.

What! will all those good works which wicked men may have done vanish away and be annihilated? No, even worse will the issue of them be. They will be exhibited in their real character; the shew of good will be stripped from them. Their prayers will be seen to be solemn mockery of God, and their alms a proud insult upon his sovereignty; all their hopes become their shame: "the gold becomes dim, the silver is become dross." (Lam. iv. 1; Isa. i. 22.)

But if the good works of sinners disappear from the sight, let us consider,

WHAT APPEARS PROMINENT.

Those sins which they had entirely forgotten and lost sight of, awake as it were from a long sleep, and rise in all their horror and malignity and vileness, without subterfuge or excuse to cover them.

It has been thus illustrated. Suppose a man to be taken with this absurd fancy. He has a large room in his house in which he dwells, and he darkens this room. He then employs himself day after day in filling this room with wasps and hornets, vipers and serpents. Suppose further, that as soon as these noxious creatures are placed there, they become torpid and do not annoy him, and he forgets that they were there. At length the room is nearly filled ; and then the window shutters are suddenly opened ; and all these venomous creatures recover at once from their torpor, receive fresh life and attack this man, and wound him from head to foot, stinging him in every part with the unutterable anguish of their poisoned darts and fangs.

This is a picture of what shall happen to the worldly man and of what he is doing. Sin is the wasp and the hornet, the viper and the serpent. The room is his conscience ; he is daily filling this room with sins : torpor is our forgetfulness of sin, the bursting open of the windows is the hour of death, or the coming of Christ, and in eternity the ceaseless stings of all the vain thoughts, idle words, neglected duties, and multipled iniquities of our lives will for ever wound and torment our souls.

Sin now appears to be but a little evil, attended with no material consequences, and soon forgotten : but then it will appear in its real malignity and abomination, in its exceeding sinfulness. We shall see in more just proportions the glorious majesty of God, and how intolerable it is that such a creature as man is, should scorn the great and eternal God, should neglect and disregard the Almighty Creator, on whom he depends for life and breath and all things. We shall see what tremendous confusion sin produces in the whole of Creation, and if once permitted with impunity, what terrible disorder, what ruin and devastation it would bring through the universe ; we shall see that its bent is to dethrone God. We shall then see more of the spotless purity of God's justice, how impartial, and perfect, and holy he is ! how he cannot look upon iniquity, and how glorious God is, in thus hating all sin. We shall be then

for ever enfolded in what we discern to be the vileness of sin, and the real love of God in its punishment. The unutterable regret for rejected invitations, and the bitter, but unavailing repentance for lost opportunities, will be another part of hell torments.

Then also will appear in its just magnitude, what eternity is. We never understand it now, or we could not be so engrossed in this world. But O the sorrow of a suffering eternity! Have you never observed that while joyful times pass very quickly, suffering times seem vastly longer: Job felt this when he said, "Wearisome nights are appointed to me. When I lie down I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone," (Job vii. 3, 4.) But all the sufferings of God's children are in this life, and therefore temporary. O what will be the wearisome agony of a *suffering* eternity!

But I stop—My brethren, what a curse is sin! Do you say, God is merciful? O yes, merciful beyond our utmost thoughts. There are heights and depths in his mercy beyond our largest conceptions; "as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him." (Psalm ciii. 11.) But his mercy to the good requires the punishment of the bad. Do you say that the punishment is too great for the crime? Ah! remember, that the criminal is ever an unfit judge of the law which he has broken, and of the sentence by which he suffers.

Make not one vain excuse; acknowledge without equivocation, that you do for your evil deeds worthily deserve to be punished; fly at once to the Lord Jesus; there is no way of escape but in him. But O the rich and full glories of the gospel of our Lord Christ! In him there is a complete salvation. He by his sufferings has made full satisfaction for all your sins; he has removed the curse by bearing it for you. He by his obedience has wrought out a perfect righteousness. O that you were wise, and understood this! Were you not wrapped up in the darkness of sin, you would neither give sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, until you had hope of deliver-

ance, and would indeed count every thing but loss, to "win Christ, and be found in him." (Phil. iii. 8.)

Christians, can you bless God enough, day by day, if you have seen your ruin by nature, and been turned to God, and are "waiting for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead; even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come?"

# SERMON XII.

## HELL.

### MATTHEW XXV. 41.

*Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

On this soul-stirring and alarming subject, we have already preached one Sermon, in which we proposed to consider it under three heads—1. The persons to be punished. 2. The curse which lies upon them. 3. The everlasting punishment to be endured. We pointed out the persons to be punished, under three characters: the open sinner, the ungodly, and the neglecters of Christ Jesus:—and the curse which lies upon them in two views; the curse itself, and the developement of that curse, under what disappears and what appears prominent. But O how wonderful is our hardness and insensibility to these things! If you heard that your house had taken fire, and the flames were spreading from room to room, how it would agitate you! But you can hear of eternal flames, unmoved and unaffected! This shews how true is the scriptural account of man, as "dead in sin." There remains to consider,

III. THE EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT TO BE ENDURED.

"The wicked go away into everlasting punishment."

The punishment of which we now speak, is the punishment to be inflicted on the wicked after the day of judgment. And in order to have distinct views, remember there is, to the righteous dying in the Lord, a double state of blessedness, a paradise before the judgment-day, as well as the kingdom of glory after the judgment-day. There is also to the wicked dying in sin, a double state of misery, a hell before the day of judgment, and after that judgment the lake of fire and brimstone, in which the wicked are tormented for ever and ever. It is said by Job (xxi. 30.) "The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction, they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath." And Peter declares, "The Lord knoweth how....to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." (2 Peter ii. 9.) They are now in the prison of hell, where the rich man was cast on his death, and with the fallen angels they are "delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment."

What that judgment is, we have now to consider. I shall point out,

1. THE JUDGE WHO SENTENCES THEM.
2. THE LOSS OF GOOD.
3. THE SUFFERING OF WOE.
4. THE ACCURSED SOCIETY.
5. THE PERPETUAL PUNISHMENT.

1. THE JUDGE WHO SENTENCES THEM.

Here is the first fearful part of the woe. There is but one Saviour for lost sinners even now. There is but one Mediator and Advocate. He is tender, he is full of compassion ; but this very Being becomes the awful Judge. "The wrath of Him that sitteth on the throne," is "the wrath of the Lamb." (Rev. vi. 16.) If it were a cruel tyrant who sentenced them, there would be less ground for despair and horror. But it is one whose love is as unquestionable as his justice. He who left his Father's glory, who emptied himself of divine fulness, and took upon him the form of a servant, to die, that sinners might not die eternally ; he must love man. He who wears our nature,

must know our frame, and therefore must be an equitable Judge. And yet such is his truth, his purity, and his holiness, that from his own mouth proceeds the unutterably dreadful doom, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

O when I think how the sinner will at the last day tremble in his presence; and look now at the way in which he slights and despises him. I am struck with amazement at our present unconcern. Talk to men now about subjection to Christ, they mock at you as enthusiasts; but O the day will come, when the remembrance of a dishonoured Christ will fill the heart with bitterest regret. 'O my madness!' will the lost soul say, 'Christ was proclaimed in my ears. I was invited to come to receive freely from him salvation. He was a sufficient Redeemer: but now the only possible Redeemer is my judge, my sentencer, my condemner for ever.'

Mark again the punishment as it consists in privation; or,

2. THE LOSS OF GOOD.

This is implied in that fearful word, depart,—"Depart from me."

Our Lord frequently thus describes the condition of the lost. (Matt. vii. 23.) "Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." So we are told, Psalm v. 5, "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of iniquity."

Now to understand this, remember that sinners can have nothing, and hope for nothing, from a holy God, but through the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only channel by which any good, either for our souls, or our bodies, for time or for eternity, can come to us. And this Mediator has been rejected and despised by those on whom this sentence is denounced. They would not have Christ for their Saviour, they would not have spiritual blessings through him: they would not acknowledge that their worldly good was given through him. Most justly then is all good taken away. ALL THE GOOD OF THIS WORLD,

its riches, honours and pleasures ; its health and vigour, its cheerfulness and mirth, its ease, independence, security, and comfort, all, all are then lost. The ALLEVIATIONS ALSO OF THIS WORLD'S EVILS, are there removed. There is disease from head to foot, but no medicine, no physician, no healing balm : there is malice, hatred, revenge, wrath, and enmity to the uttermost, but no love and forgiveness, no friend to protect and comfort ; there is shame and contempt without measure, but no respect, or honour, or approbation.

ALL SPIRITUAL AND HEAVENLY JOYS ARE LOST. The favour and love of Almighty God, and all the joys of the light of his countenance, and the beaming eye of his tenderness which ever delight the souls of the blessed,—the blissful sight of Christ, and the abode with him, who feeds his people, and leads them to the heavenly springs, and by the fountains of living waters, all, all is lost ! "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." (2 Thess. i. 9.) The society of the glorious company of the apostles, and the goodly fellowship of the prophets : the triumph of the noble army of martyrs, and the glory of the holy church universal, are for ever lost ! O unconverted sinners, before it be too late, think of that place where there shall be no light, no joy ; think what it will be to see "Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob," and all the prophets "in the kingdom of God, and you yourself thrust out." (Luke xiii. 28.) O to be shut out of those joyful and happy regions, and shut up with the wicked for ever ! "For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie," (Rev. xxii. 15.) Here is of itself a hell. By their present miserable want of it, they know too late the value of the blessedness.

All this loss, too, is ascribable to themselves ; it is their own fault. "They said unto God, depart from us, and what can the Almighty do for us ?" (Job xxii. 17.) and voluntarily chose that loss under which they smart. Suppose a man comes into the possession of a large estate, with

a still richer reversion in reserve: suppose by prodigality and wastefulness he squanders both away; and suppose, reduced to the lowest state of wretchedness and want, he beholds all the estate and reversion in the possession of one whom he despised: surely he must painfully and remorsefully bewail his folly:—thus foolish is the unconverted sinner now; and thus will he bewail his loss of heaven, only with inconceivable aggravation of sorrow according to the unsearchable greatness of his loss.

Those who once said, as the Gadarenes did to Christ, "Depart from us;" will not again see the Saviour till they hear him say, "Depart from me," and all their loss is irreparable; to them "the mist of darkness is reserved for ever." 2 Pet. ii. 17.

3. The suffering of woe.

This is expressed in the word "fire;" the most acute suffering we know upon earth being that occasioned by fire. The original expression is emphatically the fire, the everlasting fire; as if all other fires were but figures compared with this last great fire of Divine wrath.

Do we conclude then that there will be real and material fire? There may or there may not be; we presume not to decide what may be the exact nature of that punishment, the sharpness of which this term represents: but those objections which are sometimes brought against material fire, are not really conclusive. If it be said, the rich man was in hell immediately on his death, and fire hurts not disembodied spirits, more is said than can be proved; fire only now hurts the mind from the connection which God has established between the body and the soul; and it may please him to establish a constitution by which the disembodied spirit may also suffer there from fire. The body shall also be raised, and the body and soul of the wicked are to be alike the subjects of future torment.

It is perfectly clear, however, that it must denote exquisite suffering, even extremity of pain, and that the whole man will thus suffer. There is a *place* of torment for the body; Judas went *to his own place.* (Acts i. 25.) There is

a "state" of torment for the soul. And O how unutterable that torment, when whichever way the soul looks, there is nothing but tribulation and anguish! If it look back on the past, it sees time wasted away, opportunity for ever lost, enjoyment irrecoverably gone, folly irremediably and eternally ruinous. If it looks within and around, fiery flames, unmitigated pain, "the worm that never dies." If it looks to the future, O that fearful look, judgment to come, wrath to come, and that for ever.

The wicked fall into the hands of the living God, and he is said "to shew his wrath, and to make his power known on the vessels fitted for destruction." (Rom. ix. 22.) O terrible words! Sinners, unconverted sinners, fear, above all fear, to fall into the hands of the living God. Think of his power, it is Almighty! Think of his wrath, it is infinite!

But there is one thing further that should peculiarly alarm nominal Christians. There are degrees of punishment in hell, and there is special aggravation of suffering to the specially wicked; and those are accounted specially wicked who had Christian advantages and neglected them. Thus our Lord says, "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." (Luke xii. 47.) Thus Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum enjoyed the light of the gospel, but disregarded it, and our Lord says, "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment." (Luke x. 12.) O nominal Christians, flee, we beseech you, from the wrath to come. You will wish that you had been a Hottentot or a New Zealander, or anything rather than to have had all the aggravated guilt of neglecting the full privileges of a Christian land.

4. THE ACCURSED SOCIETY.

"It is prepared for the devil and his angels."

Here is another tremendous part of the sinner's doom.—It is prepared. For six thousand years those fires have been preparing, and materials have been gathering together.

God has had the disposal of every brand, Isaiah says, xxx. 33. "Tophet is ordained of old, yea, for the King," (even the King of kings,) "it is prepared. He hath made it deep and large, the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it."

And then what is the company?—Devils and evil spirits! Ah! to be associated with those cruel, malignant, and hateful beings, who first tempted, and then will laugh and mock us, taunt us, and torment us, is indeed woe. To be associated, for ever too, with liars and murderers, thieves, drunkards, and adulterers! Those who have forgotten God, may still have been disgusted with gross sinners, and for them to be for ever joined with the most vile and abandoned, and linked with them for ever in the one prison of hell; this is an aggravation of misery that no mind can adequately conceive. The wicked may be pleasant enough to the wicked in their mirth, but will they like each other as companions for ever in torment?

5. The perpetual punishment.

The suffering is eternal and irreversible. This, God does most plainly assert; he calls it in our text, "everlasting fire." It is also contrasted with the reward of the righteous. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." v. 46.

The strongest terms are repeatedly used on this point. It is said by our Lord, (Mark ix. 43—48. "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;" and this is in substance repeated again and again, so as to have in a few verses, six solemn assertions of the eternal duration of the future punishment. So we find by Jude 7, the wicked shall suffer "the vengeance of eternal fire." In Rev. xiv. 10, 11, we read that he who receives the mark of the beast, shall "drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without measure into the cup of his indignation, and he shall be tormented

with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb ; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever."

Thus God has expressly declared, that the punishment of the wicked shall be everlasting. How then is that punishment to be ended ! By force ? What ! overpower omuipotence ? By fraud? What ! outwit infinite wisdom? By exhaustion ! Can anything be annihilated ? What ! in contradiction to the Divine will !

But is it not unjust to visit upon a temporary sin an eternal woe ? Ah ! do you not even in this world see men suffer lasting evils from a momentary sin ? If it be necessary for God to threaten, it is right for God to execute, and the necessity of the threatening is proved ; as even this tremendous penalty does not deter many from the sin, and though multitudes are warned, and escape the coming wrath, multitudes still go on in sin notwithstanding every threatening.

But it may remove remaining doubts of the Divine veracity on this fearful subject, to remember that our obligations to God being infinite, life and death being placed before us;—the wicked volnntarily choosing death, justly merit the awful penalty. They remain impenitent in hell itself, they go on sinning there, and if they had lived here for ever, they would have gone on sinning for ever ; God is clear when he judges, and even those who suffer will be constrained to justify him who condemns them to eternal woe.

In the vast extent of God's creation, when we look abroad on the starry firmament, and see worlds upon worlds, what if there be one region like a prison, where the Just Governor of the whole universe confines criminals, as a moral lesson to the universe, a guard against rebellion, and a preservative to obedience ? Can you say that this may not be in infinite wisdom, equity, and love ?

But mainly and chiefly, hell is the mirror which displays the glories of his power, and truth, and justice, and holiness. " Hath he said, and shall he not do it ?" O

risk not eternal ruin on the most improbable of all contingences, the chance that God may lie and deceive, or rather on the utter impossibility that he should do so.

Do you say it is severe ? Ah ! remember the assertion flies back. Be not so severe to yourselves, as to rush upon it for vain pleasures ; wrong not, destroy not, your own selves; you are forewarned, and yet you hasten to the ruin ; it is distinctly laid before you, and yet you prefer it to self-denial, faith, hope, and love.

The voice of the whole sermon is "Flee from the wrath to come." Linger not a moment on the plain ! Escape, "escape for thy life," lest thou be consumed ; escape to the only city of refuge, even Christ Jesus !

In applying this, I would add two or three plain directions.

1. Dread sin as the worst of all evils. Losses of property are evils ; poverty and contempt are evils ; sicknesses in our persons or families are evils ; national calamities are evils ; wars and famines and pestilences are evils, but sin is the worst evil, for it is the cause of all others ; bringing down upon the creature the displeasure and wrath of him from whose appointment all suffering originally comes, as well as all happiness, and, if having its full issue, landing the sinner in endless ruin. O sinner, stop in thy mad course : sin, if persisted in, will be thy ruin here and for ever ?

2. Repent in time. There is a way of escape ; there is space afforded for a change of mind :" "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," (Acts iii. 19.) ere it be too late. You want a changed mind, consisting in a deep sorrow for sin, a hearty acknowledgment of it before God, a lively faith in his free pardon through the blood of Jesus, and then an amended life in righteousness and true holiness. You must be born again, and God has promised, if you will inquire of him, to give a new heart and a new spirit. O can you be content to receive all your good in this life, and to be miserable for ever ; for "except you repent, you must perish." Turn you then

to that Divine Saviour who gives repentance and remission of sins. (Acts v. 31.) "Turn you, for why will you die?" This leads me to add

3. VALUE CHRIST JESUS SUPREMELY as the giver of all you need, (Psalm lxviii. 18.) the only refuge, the all-sufficient Saviour of the lost. Are you yet impenitent and unconverted? O value Christ, as able to give you repentance, and exalted for this very purpose. He came into the world to be the deliverer from the wrath to come; He yet lives to make intercession for the transgressors. Apply to him. You are yet in the land of prayer and of hope: you are yet within the possibility of salvation; it may be, you may yet reach the good land afar off, and gain everlasting light, and life, and glory; it shall be, if you do in earnest go to Jesus, with all your sins, and trust in him.

Are you trusting in Jesus, and converted to God? blessed is your state! "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Rom. viii. 1.) Christians can say of him, "He hath delivered us from the wrath to come." (1 Thess. i. 10.) They can stand on the rock of divine truth, amidst all the raging storm of wrath rushing on the ungodly, and be in perfect security, in "the hiding-place from the wind, and the covert from the tempest." (Isaiah xxxii. 2.) "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" (Rom. viii. 33.) He who has the keys of death and hell, is their friend, and none can hurt or annoy. O Christians, may gratitude to your Redeemer, and tender compassion for perishing sinners, and persevering endeavours to lead them to your Protector and Deliverer, bear testimony that you are the redeemed of the Lord, whom he hath delivered out of the hand of the enemy, and formed for himself, a people to shew forth his praise!

# SERMON XIII.

## HEAVEN.

REVELATION XXII. 3—5.

*And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there: and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.*

IMMORTAL beings, here is the prize of your high calling! Here is the glorious recompence held out for your attainment. To assist you to gain this is the noble object of the Christian ministry. For this we are ambassadors of Christ to you: and if you ask, May such sinful creatures as we, have such a hope? our commission reaches every one of you; "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Oh that you and I may together attain this holy and eternal happiness!

We have now to consider this—the inheritance of the saints, the state of heavenly happiness and glory. May the Divine Spirit elevate our thoughts, and reveal to us "the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Cor. ii. 10.)

Do you ask, Is such a state attainable by fallen sinful creatures? May I reach those happy regions! I will

also ask you one question. Do you really so desire it as to follow the divine directions for its attainment? Are you made willing by the Divine Spirit to sacrifice every thing that would interfere with your progress towards, and preparation for it? If indeed this be so, then I reply, It is not only attainable by you, but you already have the blessing. (John v. 24.) Not one shall honestly, heartily, and enduringly seek this glory in God's appointed method, and fail of success. Oh that God the Holy Ghost may so teach us that the consideration of the subject may excite in all, the holy ambition of being for ever blessed in the presence of Him, in whose presence is fulness of joy.

This blessedness comprises,

1. THE ENTIRE REMOVAL OF EVIL.
2. THE FULL POSSESSION OF GOOD.
3. DELIGHTFUL OCCUPATION.
4. THE BEATIFIC VISION.
5. PERPETUAL GLORY.

## I. THE ENTIRE REMOVAL OF EVIL.

Without this no happiness can be complete; whatever good there may be, as long as any admixture of evil remains, there is a root of bitterness, which would disturb and trouble the pure streams of enjoyment.

This part of our future happiness we can the better comprehend. It is brought before us under two terms, "no curse, and no night there."

1. THERE WILL BE NO CURSE THERE. No remains of God's displeasure, no anger—not one frown on his brow. There will be nothing to occasion a curse: not one sin remaining, no temptation will be presented before us, nor ever ruffle our peaceful minds; no conflict with indwelling corruption; no warfare with any spiritual enemy. Not one spiritual enemy will be there. From that happy kingdom of light and love, Satan and all his emissaries and followers are for ever excluded. Nor is there any ensnaring world to seduce, nor deceitful heart to betray, nor an evil thought engendered within or suggested from without. There is therefore nothing to call down the curse.

Nor is there any of God's anger on account of our past sins. Then in its fullest sense will it be true, "Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." (Isa. xii. 1.) As there is no condemnation on God's part, so there are no accusations of conscience on the sinner's part. That promise will be fulfilled, "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." (Micah vii. 19.) The soul, adorned with the Redeemer's beauties, and enriched with the lovely graces of his Spirit, takes up the inspiring strain, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." (Isa. lxi. 10.)

All those temporal sufferings, which follow the curse, will also for ever have terminated. "There is no pain there." (Rev. xxi. 4.) "The inhabitant shall not say I am sick," (Isa. xxxiii. 24.) and as no disease invades the human frame, so there is no death there. (Rev. xxi. 4.) "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." (Rev. vii. 16.) Thus there is no sickness, and the body is freed from all those weaknesses and infirmities which weigh it down, and depress and burden it here. "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." (1 Cor. xv.)

All those beings who are under the curse will be for ever removed. Now the Christian is day by day "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; (2 Peter ii. 7:) rivers of tears run down his eyes, because men keep not God's laws;" (Psalm cxix. 136,) he sees the God whom he serves dishonoured, his laws trampled upon, his day profaned, and the ungodly triumphing: but no sinner shall stand "in the congregation of the righteous" there (Psalm i. 5.)—all are of one heart and one mind.

In hell, all curses meet, concentrate, and there are confined: And why is it otherwise in heaven? how can sin-

ners ever reach those celestial heights? why do they, once defiled with sin, but now free from all sin, dwell in those holy places where enters nothing that defileth? The reason is this, they were among those "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life; (Jude 21,) he kept them from falling," and presented them "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." (Jude 24.)

Would you be free from all curse! Oh look to him who alone has redeemed you: who alone can redeem you from the curse.

2. THERE WILL BE NO NIGHT THERE.

No absence from God, the true light, nor any of the evils consequent on that. If here we find the night as well as the day a blessing, it is because we need its quiet and repose —it is on account of our infirmities. If perfectly happy and unwearied, night would only be an interruption depriving us of a portion of our bliss.

Truly "the light is sweet:" it spreads beauty and glory in its track over regions, which without it are all gloom and obscurity. But the brightest day on earth, with all its lovely scenes, its waving corn, its verdant fields, its peaceful rivers, glittering in the sun, and all the richness of the expanded prospect, beaming with light and beauty, are but as the dark night compared with the surpassing glory of the heavenly day. *The night*, says the Apostle, speaking of this life, "the night is far spent, the day is at hand." (Rom. xiii. 12.)

And truly there will be no occasion for night there. Our bodies will be too powerful and active and strong, either to admit of fatigue, or to require rest. We shall be too happy to desire for a moment, cessation or change. Those who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple," (Rev. vii. 14.) they rest not from their blissful employment.

The expression, *no night*, seems more immediately to convey the idea of the absence of all evils incident to a

state of darkness, whether spiritual or temporal. There will be no sinful ignorance, no error in our conceptions of things. There will be no guilt desiring darkness to veil its criminal conduct; no concealment requisite to hide any thing from observation: no danger of deviating from the right path, nor reason to dread the approach of enemies to invade our tranquillity.

In the Divine dispensations on earth, there have been darker and brighter days. The Jewish dispensation compared with the Gospel was a time of shade and darkness. The middle ages were dark ages—but in all dispensations as contrasted with the state of heavenly glory, "now we see through a glass darkly." In that glorious rest there is the brightness of one everlasting day—a cloudless and eternal lustre, with full capability of body and mind for all its glory.

As in hell there is "the blackness of darkness," (Jnde 13.) and all is night for ever; so in heaven there is the noon-day blaze, and that for ever. Every thing that is dark and ignorant, with all the sorrows of an earthly state, is gone; "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away. (Rev. xxi. 4.)

Thus is every evil entirely removed; and even in this negative view, does not heaven, my brethren, present something unspeakably attractive and engaging? But it comprises,—

## II. THE FULL POSSESSION OF GOOD.

Two expressions point out this,—"the throne of God and of the Lamb" is there, and "the Lord God giveth them light."

I would consider this in two views: the manifestation of God's glory, and the light which he imparts.

### The manifestation of God's glory.

In the first verse of the chapter we read of "a pure river of water of life, proceeding out of the throne of God

and of the Lamb : " which seems to be more especially intended to point out the quickening and purifying communications of the Holy Ghost, of which our Saviour speaks, under the same figure of " rivers of living waters." (John vii. 37—39.)

For enjoying glory, oneness with God is absolutely needful. " Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." This holiness is in itself true joy and happiness, and it is perfected in the vision of God's glory. " We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

In the presence and enjoyment of the triune Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, consists the complete possession of all good. Heavenly happiness is being present with the glorious God, and fully enjoying him as our portion and reward. We know what a difference it makes to have with us a beloved earthly friend ; how children rejoice in the love and presence of a tender mother ; and the wife in the society of a beloved husband ; and the friend in the intercourse of an endeared and earthly friend ; and those greatly indebted to a benefactor in his continued regard and kindness : and how quickly time flies away in such converse. But O what will it be when without alloy we see our best parent, our true husband, our greatest benefactor, our greatest friend, face to face, and dwell with him for ever !

The scriptures represent this as the distinguishing privilege of futurity. Our Lord says, " I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also : " (John xiv. 3.) and in his prayer to his Father, he offers up this ardent and glowing petition : " Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me ; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." (John xvii. 24.) And so he assured the penitent thief on the cross, " To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke xxiii. 43.)

The same hopes are continually expressed by the people of God. " Having a desire," says St. Paul, " to depart and be

with Christ, which is far better ;" (Phil. i. 23.) and speaking of Christians he says, " We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord ;" (2 Cor. v. 8.) " and so shall we ever be with the Lord ; wherefore comfort ye one another with these words." (1 Thess. iv. 17, 18.)

Let the miser rejoice in the possession of unsubstantial wealth ; let the sensualist have his momentary joy : let the ambitious, or the man of science, or of human wisdom, pride themselves in the attainment of their several objects : O what is their happiness compared with that of him who has for his portion, the God of true riches, of true glory, of true pleasures, and can bathe in that ocean of Divine fulness for ever and ever.

Now, we do not see God on his throne. Beautiful as our world may be, the earth is but his footstool ; and though he does reign, still, it is not apparent to the eye of sense. Wicked men seem to prosper, the enemies of God seem to have the upper hand. When our Lord was on earth, though spiritual eyes beheld his glory, " the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth ;" (John i. 14.) he was not seated on the throne, but was despised and rejected of men. When God was worshipped in his temple at Jerusalem, there was but the typical outward service, the figure of the true : and though in the holy of holies on the mercy-seat, there were symbols of the Divine presence ; still was he not *seen as he is.* Now we have to say " Our Father which art in heaven :" men on earth having through sin lost his presence ; but then it will be said, "Behold ! the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them ; God himself shall be with them." In the temple, mentioned in Ezekiel, to be built for restored Jews, the waters flowed from under the *threshold,* (Ezek. xlvii. 1—12.) emblematic of the communion they shall have with God ; but in the heavenly glory, for the risen saints, they flow directly from the throne. For there God is visibly seen as the sovereign, reigning not only with undisputed, but with universally acknowledged and manifested, as well as un-

speakably glorious, delightful and joyful empire over that happy world. The language of every glorified saint there, not in distant hope, but in actual and full possession, is—"In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Psalm xvi. 11.)

THE LIGHT WHICH GOD IMPARTS.

"They need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light."

We will notice what they have no need of, and what they possess.

WHAT THEY NEED NOT. "They need no candle;" that is, no borrowed or artificial light, invented to supply the absence of a better and greater. All human means are imperfect; all sensible things to supply our necessities, as they are but remedies for defects, so they are themselves defective. The clothes that protect us from the cold, wear out and need to be renewed; the fire that warms, consumes away in the very act of communicating warmth: the food that nourishes, is destroyed in affording that nourishment; the candle in shedding its light, gradually wastes away: and all these helps are but imperfect and incomplete, and therefore, when that which is perfect comes, that which is in part shall be done away.

*They need no sun*—that is no indirect light through the creatures of God. We know God now by his works. We see him through sensible images; "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work; day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night sheweth knowledge." (Psalm xix. 12.)

Tell them I AM, Jehovah said
To Moses, while earth shook with dread,
And smitten to the heart,
At once above, beneath, around,
All nature, without voice, or sound,
Replied, O Lord! THOU ART.

There is the still greater light of Revelation; the light of grace, which tells us much of God, that we could never discern in the book of creation.

But the light of glory transcends all these. Let us consider then, WHAT THEY POSSESS: "The Lord God giveth them light." He enlightens them directly from himself: no borrowed light from his works, no teaching of the creature, but direct and immediate from the Creator himself —"in thy light shall we see light."

Many and inestimable are the blessings which are comprehended in this gift. It seems more especially to denote knowledge, holiness, and happiness.

There will be PERFECT KNOWLEDGE there. This is according to that statement, "Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." Now our greatest blessings are apprehended only by faith; but then they will be actually ours by sight and enjoyment. Now, what time it takes to learn to read! what patience and application to acquire knowledge! what loss of health to become extensively learned! But there at a glance we shall take in more knowledge than years of study and experience can give the most laborious student here. We shall see them intuitively and at once. All that which is dark and obscure as the thick night, will have the broad light of day shed over it. We shall see the beauty of God's ways, the infinite wisdom, and the boundless love displayed in our heaviest sorrows and severest trials. "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." O the glories of that history of histories, the developing and unfolding of the providential dispensations of God towards his people! We shall hold personal converse with the glorified objects of them—with Enoch, and Noah, and Moses, and all the saints of God; and what a knowledge will this give, of the wonders of Divine wisdom, truth, grace and love. And each saint in glory will be as a mirror reflecting another and another view of the graces, beauties, and glories, of Immanuel.

PERFECT HOLINESS is another part of the light there fully given. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all," and in those happy regions it is in the highest sense true, "we walk in the light as he is in the light." There

will not be one sin left to defile us. O the blessedness of entire freedom from every sin! When that galling yoke of bondage is not only eased but withdrawn, and the last Egyptian, as it were, is seen dead on the sea-shore, with what exultation shall we sing, "The Lord is my strength and song: he is become my salvation!" (Exod. xv. 2.) Never can the Christian have fulness of joy while one sin remains; but "when Christ shall appear, and we shall be like him," and when that perfect "holiness which becomes God's house for ever," is ours, then shall the enlarged mind of the believer be completely filled, "Then shall I be satisfied when I awake up after thy likeness."

PERFECT HAPPINESS is also included in this expression: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." (Psalm xcvii. 11.) Here, even in the very seed-time, there is a present reward "in keeping God's commandments," but when we come to reap the harvest of joy, O what joy must that be which is called by God himself "fulness of joy." Our best joys here are transitory and limited: but there will be unlimited, boundless and eternal joy. See the glorious throng—observe the palms in their hands, and the crowns on their heads; behold them arrayed in the white garments before the throne. Who are these? They are the redeemed of the Lord—"they come with singing to Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain," they shall for ever possess, "gladness and joy—and sorrow and mourning shall flee away." (Isaiah xxxv. 10.)

But they take up their golden harps, they begin one of the heavenly songs, the number of those who join is "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," and the grand united chorus of all is "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

And as all their happiness flows directly from God, so it is unceasing and secure. "The Lord giveth;" there is an incessant flow of knowledge, and holiness and happiness.

O how triumphant and enrapturing, the song of praise raised by the heavenly host in the full enjoyment of all this blessedness! "With what life and alacrity will the saints in their blessed communion exalt the object of their love and praise! The seraphim about the throne cry out to one another, to express their zeal and joy in celebrating his eternal purity and power, and the glory of his goodness. O the unspeakable pleasure of this concert, when every soul is harmonious, and contributes his full part to the music of heaven. Could we hear but some echo of those songs, wherewith the heaven of heavens resounds, some remains of those voices wherewith the saints above triumph in the praises and in the solemn adoration of the King of Spirits, how would it inflame our desires to be joined with them! "Blessed are those that are in thy house, they always praise thee."

O that I could in any way stir up all earnestly and zealously to seek heaven. Honestly and heartily turn your back on this world and all its sins, and set your faces to Zion, and you shall reach those heavenly heights, and arrive at that blessed city, whose "walls are salvation, and all her gates praise." Count all but loss for this, and stretch every nerve, if, by any means you may be counted worthy to attain this glory.

# SERMON XIV.

## HEAVEN.

### REVELATION XXIII. 3—5.

*And there shall be no more curse : but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it : and his servants shall serve him : And they shall see his face : and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there ; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun ; for the Lord God giveth them light : and they shall reign for ever and ever.*

Could heavenly happiness be now seen by the saints in all its blessedness, there would be no room for the full exercises of faith, and comparatively little display of the excellence of divine grace in the hope, and patience, and holiness of God's people. To exercise faith, it is only revealed in prospect ; to excite hope, it is but partially developed, and it "doth not yet appear what we shall be."

We proposed to consider, 1. The entire removal of evil : 2. The full possession of good : 3. The delightful occupation : 4. The beatific vision : 5. The perpetual glory enjoyed. The two former of these we have already explained. We proceed to consider ;—

### III. THE DELIGHTFUL OCCUPATION.

"His servants shall serve him."

Notice THE GLORIOUS BEING WHO IS SERVED.

The King of Kings: the everliving God. It is not clear whether the sacred writer designed to refer to the Father or the Son; nor is it at all material. There is a perfect unity. "He that honoureth the Son, honoureth the Father also." The Being served is he to whom all service alone is due. Created by his power, redeemed by his blood, sanctified by his Spirit, shall they not for ever consecrate every power to him whose they are, and to whom all they can render, is infinitely due! According to the rank of the master, is the elevation of the servant; to be in the immediate service of the King is thought a high office; what is it immediately to serve the Lord God omnipotent!

Notice next HIS SERVANTS.

What were they! once vile miserable sinners, alienated from God, and his enemies by wicked works; but they heard of "the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," (Zech. xiii. 1.) and they "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. xiv.) They thus, quickened by his Spirit, served him in faith, hope, and love, and learned on earth the employment of heaven, to do the will of God. These servants are redeemed sinners and glorified saints. While servants, they are children also; they dwell with their master as children with a parent, and they ever behold his face beaming with love and joy unspeakable. Once they aimed to serve him, but it was more aim than attainment. Once they prayed, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," and now that prayer is fully accomplished, and they themselves enjoy the very fulness of their desires, and in heaven itself "delight to do the will of God."

Observe further THE NATURE OF THEIR SERVICE.

But what mind can conceive the holy admiration with which they behold the glories of God, the joyful gratitude with which they celebrate his praises; the delightful exertions with which they fly to do his will?

But did they not serve God below? What is the difference between their serving him here, and their serving him there? As to our service here, we are soon weary in

it. Our spirits flag, we require rest ; but there the mind is ever lively and awake, the body is ever active and alive, the service is unwearied. As to our service here, it is full of imperfection, our faith is weak, our hope is dull, our love is cold, our praises are feeble, all is disproportioned and imperfect ; but in that blessed world, faith becomes sight —hope is there enjoyment, love burns with intense ardour, and praises from the heart ever ascend ; all is proportioned and perfect. In this world our service soon ceases ; nearly one third of our time is lost in sleep, and of how much of the rest do worldliness and sin continually rob God. If we enjoy communion with him in prayer or praise, the service is soon past and gone ; but there, our service is perpetual, and the happy employment of doing God's will shall occupy us for ever.

Once more observe THE COMMUNION there enjoyed WITH OUR FELLOW SERVANTS. The glorified saints rejoice in each other's holiness and happiness, and thus the general happiness of the whole is infinitely extended and enlarged. There are many hindrances to full communion here. Real Christians know but few real Christians ; and through the many interruptions of this world, they have seldom much opportunity of fully knowing each other. Our own corruptions, and the infirmities of all God's servants here, hinder full and entire union of heart ; but there will be no alloys of this kind there. No envy or jealousy at each other's gifts and graces, happiness and glory. Just as the eye envies not the ear, and the hand envies not the foot ; but all the members of the body are exalted in the happiness of each, so will it be there. The happiness of another will be mine in his possessing it ; as the wife is exalted in the husband, and the child in the parent, so shall there be joy in the presence of the glorified servants of God, in every joy that every servant possesses. You shall be in that glorious company, where there is the full conviction that you love every individual there, and every individual loves you, and this purely, fervently, perfectly and for ever.

But let us go still farther, and contemplate,

## IV. THE BLESSED SIGHT OF GOD.

Or, as it is called, The beatific vision.

"They shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads."

We have here the nature of this vision, and, its efficacy.

1. THE NATURE OF THIS VISION—"they shall see his face."

We shall have distinct, clear, and full views of God, as we have when we see another, face to face. When Adam was innocent, he lived in the immediate presence of God, in the earthly paradise, the garden of Eden. He was, on his fall, expelled from that happy garden, and lost the sight of God. The Gospel is a process for man's recovering more than Adam lost. In order to this recovery, God gives his people the grace of faith, "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." (Heb. xi. 1.) We walk by faith, and in the exercise of faith have communion with God, but it is with many interruptions, and with much obscurity.

God is indeed every where throughout his infinite universe; higher than the heavens, deeper than hell, wider than the East from the West, or the North from the South, incomprehensibly perfect, indivisibly immense and eternal.

But in what the Scriptures call the third heavens, he peculiarly manifests himself to his happy creatures. There are the first heavens the regions of the air; the second heavens, which is the starry firmament; and the third heavens, the special residence of God. O how glorious that heavenly Jerusalem which is above! "With allusion to the brightest things here below, it is said to have a wall of jasper, buildings of gold, a foundation of precious stones, and gates of pearls; being clear as crystal, shining like unto glass, and transparent in brightness:" and if the gates be of pearl, and the streets be of gold, what are the inner rooms?

But the chief glory is this,—there God manifests his immediate presence. To see God perfectly is often des-

cribed as the special happiness of his people hereafter. "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. xii. 14.) "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matt. v. 8.) "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face—we shall see him as he is." This sight of God includes an intimate knowledge of which we can now have but little conception, and a satisfying conviction of his love to us.

It was the privilege of many saints on earth to have such communion with God, that they have been said to see him "face to face." Thus Jacob, when he wrestled with the angel. (Gen. xxxii. 30.) Thus Moses when "the Lord spake to him face to face," (Exodus xxxiii. 11.) and he tells the Israelites, "the Lord talked with you face to face." (Deut. v. 4.) All these, however, were very limited views of God. When Moses would behold his glory, he was told, "Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me, and live:" and it was only in a cleft of the rock, that he was allowed, and that for a moment, to see some distant rays of his glory.

But now, in heaven, they behold that glory shining in its strength: not visibly with the eyes, nor sensibly with the ear—for God is a Spirit; but by immediate manifestation of it, they behold him as "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty."

This glorious object of vision will engage every eye, eclipse every other light, and fill the whole circuit of the heavenly regions with its own brightness. Adored and magnified in his true glory of the *One* Lord, and loved with inexpressible love, he will be the joy and the portion of the heavenly inhabitants for ever.

THE TRANSFORMING EFFECT OF THIS SIGHT must also be observed.

"And his name is on their foreheads."

That is, they become manifestly and obviously like the

glorious God. The sight of God's glory, as discovered in the Gospel is assimilating and transforming. "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. iii. 18.) When Moses had been with God in the mount, his face shone, so that the Israelites could not behold him without a veil. But in heaven we may well suppose this effect is more immediate and complete. Then will "the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."

The name or character of God is even now visibly stamped on Christians. They "put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness;" but, through manifold infirmities, it is often difficult to discern, either in ourselves or in others, this name or divine impress.

But in heaven the name of God will be distinct and legible. His servants will be pure "as he is pure, holy as he is holy, and merciful as he is merciful." O what a blessed state of soul when there is spotless purity, entire goodness and perfect love—not one jarring note of discord, not one imagination of evil!

Nay the glorified body even will attain some resemblance of the glorious God; for it will be immortal, incorruptible, powerful, and spiritual. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory. The righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father." And who can realize all the glory of that scene, when every body of every saint reflects the glory of its Divine Creator!

### 5. THE PERPETUAL GLORY ENJOYED.

"They shall reign for ever and ever."

Here notice the perpetuity.

THEIR GLORY—"They shall reign."

The glory of the heavenly state is often described as a kingdom, and Christians as kings reigning in that kingdom. Our Saviour says to his people, "Come, ye blessed

of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ;" and they for ever sing, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion."

Even in this life, Christians are called "a Royal Priesthood" as the sure expectants of a "crown of life," (Rev. ii. 10.) "a crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. iv. 8.) and a "crown of glory." (1 Peter v. 4.) But here they are only heirs, training up for their future glorious elevation.

But why are they called kings ? Not only because a kingdom is the highest human elevation, and therefore best serves to illustrate those incomparable heights of bliss and glory to which we shall be raised hereafter : but also because they shall reign on the earth. (Matt. xxv. 21. Luke xix. 17. Rev. v. 10 ; xx. 4.)

The glory indeed of our heavenly bliss is infinitely beyond that of the most favoured earthly monarch. With all mere earthly kings, royalty and power soon terminate ; at the latest in death, and sometimes before : and, at best, their glory is unsolid and brittle. They often do not begin to reign till half a life is gone by. And then much of their time, though kings, must be spent as other men's lives are : they are subject to the same infirmities as other men ; nor is even their dominion free from a bondage : to maintain dominion requires no little sacrifice and slavery.

Now take the contrary of all these defects : a royalty never lost, enduring through eternity, (Rev. xxii. 5.) without the smallest restraint or sacrifice, and something may be conceived of the glory of God's elect in his own kingdom.

And, further, it has this peculiarity ; it is a kingdom possessed by an infinity of kings of such a character, that the glory and happiness of each adds to the glory and happiness of all. The stars in the heavens are single points of light. But in the heaven of heavens, such is the union of these stars, that all is light—one great constella-

tion of glory; "the brightness of the firmament for ever and ever."

Which leads us to consider,

Its PERPETUITY—it is "for ever and ever."

It is not a leasehold estate for the most lengthened term imaginable. Kingdoms on earth have their periods, their rise and prosperity, their decline and fall. But this kingdom is ever rising and prospering, and will never fall nor decline. Were eternity wanting, it would give a cast of darkness and gloom over the fairest scene of heaven's meridian glory.

Abraham told the rich man, "they that would pass from us to you cannot;" not that they for a moment could admit the thought of leaving; but supposing an impossible case —if they would, they cannot.

The Scriptures always describe it under the character of perpetuity. It is everlasting life, eternal glory, eternal salvation, an eternal inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Christ, everlasting habitations, a continuing city, a house eternal in the heavens, and pleasures at God's right hand for evermore. In a similar view, St. John describes the blessed as "a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." (Rev. iii. 12.) Their blessedness is therefore secure for eternity.

And in this eternity, as we cannot cease to admire and love, and delight in the infinite object of glory, so we cannot cease to be happy. The eternal God, that boundless and unfathomable ocean of love and all perfection, the saints shall for ever praise; praise Him for what He is in himself, and praise Him for what He has done and is doing for them and for all others: and as the rays of Divine love and glory shine upon them, they are reflected back again in ceaseless joyful hallelujahs.

How interrupted is all human happiness below! If we enjoy communion with God, how soon we lose the sense of his presence! If the light of his countenance shine upon us, it is but for a moment. How different will it be

there ! O the glories of those words, "for ever with the Lord ! " Well may we comfort each other with those words. Then again here, often the Christian may be cast down with the fear of perishing at the last ; "What if I should fall short at last of heaven !" If the thought should rise within, it cannot but agitate his mind. But in heaven there is no ground for such an anxiety, no possibility of such a loss : he is there, he is confirmed there for ever. After millions and millions of ages, the happiness will be as far from diminishing, and as far from ending, as when it commenced.

But language utterly fails ; imagination fails ; "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Cor. ii.) The eye of man has seen many splendid sights, goodly prospects, rich and extended views, magnificent palaces adorned with all that art can contrive, and splendid cities full of splendid edifices, the ear has heard awakening and soul-thrilling eloquence, ravishing music, touching and exquisite melodies and tender and melting expressions of sympathy and kindness ; the heart has conceived worlds upon worlds, it can multiply, it can enlarge, it can beautify, to the utmost stretch of fancy's limits :—and yet the glory of heaven is beyond all that ever human eye saw, or human ear heard, or human heart ever can now conceive, excepting in that foretaste and earnest which the Divine Spirit now gives.

So the Scriptures invariably speak of it. The Saviour dwelt in that glory ; but he describes it not. He calls heaven simply "my Father's house." (John xiv.) The Apostle Paul was carried up to it, and what says he of it ? "He heard unspeakable words, which it is not possible for a man to utter." (2 Cor. xii. 4.) St. John beheld it in his enraptured vision, and how does he develope it ? "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." (1 John iii. 2.)

I address two classes—Those neglecting this glory, and those seeking it.

1. Those neglecting this glory. How inexpressible, how mournful your folly ! Look at the conduct of

men wise for this world. Where it is a mere temporal advantage, some employment, some better situation, how vigilant and circumspect, how active and how patient also will they be! Ah! men even run with more violence to death and hell, than Christians to life and glory. But surely to neglect this great salvation is that which is emphatically folly even madness worse than chained lunacy. Think you that any who reach heaven regret any losses or any sacrifices for reaching that glory. No, they cry—"O sweet losses! O blessed sacrifices! which God in love called me to! by these he made me meet for this glory." Do any say, "I too wish to see this glory." There are two grand impediments, your guilt and your unfitness. But the Gospel shows you how both may be removed. By the redemption of the Lord Jesus, all your GUILT is forgiven, (Ephes. i. 7.) Believe in him and you shall be justified from all things. It is the gracious promise of the new Covenant. "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more;" thus you may have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." (Heb. x. 17—19.) Ask also for the gift of the Holy Spirit, by whom you will be enabled to believe, your UNFITNESS will then be removed, and your heart truly converted, and you made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

2. CHRISTIANS SEEKING THIS GLORY. Oh, my brethren, why do we spend so few thoughts upon it? Is there this exceeding and eternal weight of glory before us? Oh let us often and deeply meditate upon it. If ever you want a subject for contemplation, here you have one of the richest and fullest of animating hope. The bridegroom longs to be united to his bride; the heir longs to be of age to receive his inheritance; the merchant longs for the return of his richly-freighted vessel. Oh let us long to enter that city of the great King, of which such glorious things are spoken—and seeing it is our chief good, our last home, our everlasting felicity, let our affections be set upon it, our conversation be there already, and we, as strangers and pilgrims, pressing on, till through the gates we enter in, to dwell there for ever.

## SERMON XV.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S TRIUMPH.

1 CORINTHIANS XV. 57, 58.

*Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

HAVING explained those all-important subjects which have successively been brought before you in preceding discourses, I purpose now to consider the Christian's victory through the Lord Jesus Christ, and the duty of Christian stedfastness arising from that victory.

My object is to bring forward those great principles which, under Divine grace, tend to perseverance and fruitfulness in every good work. You have been hearing for several sabbaths the most solemn subjects discussed, and I hope, not without some impressions of their importance; but lest those impressions should be merely transient and unprofitable, I would once more labour to establish and confirm your minds in the purpose of steady adherence to the Gospel of Christ, and an abounding fruitfulness in his service. May our God prosper the effort for these ends. We will consider—

1. THE VICTORY GIVEN TO THE BELIEVER.

2. THE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE WHICH IT SHOULD HAVE.

3. THE CERTAIN RECOMPENSE OF ALL OUR LABOURS.

## 1. THE VICTORY GIVEN TO THE BELIEVER.

"Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

We lately considered the subjects of the everlasting happiness of God's people. Between us and that happiness there are many intervening obstacles; many difficulties to be surmounted, many enemies to be encountered, many conflicts to be maintained with them, and final victory to be gained over them.

In considering the victory given to the believer, let us notice, 1. our enemies; 2. the conquest over them; 3. for whom the conquest is made; and, 4. to whom it is to be ascribed.

1. OUR ENEMIES.

The Apostle has been speaking, in all the glow of a fervent spirit, of the triumphant resurrection of the righteous, and the accomplishment thereby of "the saying, Death is swallowed up in victory." In an animated figure he personifies and addresses death and the grave,—"O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" and states, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law;" and then in the words of our text pours out his warm thanksgivings for the victory.

We may notice here four enemies, The Law, Sin, Death, and the Grave.

THE LAW IS OUR ENEMY.

But is not the Law holy, just, and good? O yes, unspeakably good; and every Christian says, "Lord, how I love thy law, it is my delight all the day." It is perfectly reasonable and perfectly excellent; and to be conformed to it, will be our happiness for ever. The Law, but for sin, would not have been our enemy but our best friend. Here is one part of the unhappiness of the fall, by which that holy Law designed to be the source of hap-

piness, is become our adversary. We are all transgressors of the Law; condemnation by it is the sad and wretched consequence of transgression. The curse of its violation is upon us; and its purity, therefore, instead of being our delight, is our terror and our hatred. O fearful state in which the excellences of God's perfect Law become only so many grounds of our condemnation!

SIN IS OUR ENEMY—In fact the one enemy, the chief enemy, for all might be included in this, and all others have power only because we have yielded to sin. "Sin is the transgression of the law." It is doing what God has forbidden, and omitting to do what he has required; and could we see it as it is, we should see it to be compounded of unbelief, ignorance, pride, rebellion, infatuation, and madness. By sin, the subject opposes himself to the King; the son to the Father, and the creature to the Creator. Sin is man's contradiction to the will, nay his defiance of the authority of his Maker. Sin is the introducer of all sorrow and pain, sickness, disease, and death, and is the very sting of all these. It makes the holy God justly displeased with us. It arrays his truth and justice and love itself against us, and all his perfect attributes are insulted by it. Yet we have all bowed down before, and served sin; admitted him into our very bosoms, and he has us by nature so completely in his grasp, that we are his slaves, (John viii. 34.) and his sons, "the children of disobedience." (Eph. ii. 2.)

DEATH IS OUR ENEMY. This is the enemy which follows in the path of sin, and we fall under his power as soon as we have sinned,—first, sin, then death. "The soul that sinneth it shall die;" and all having sinned, the whole human race yields to this irresistible enemy. Wherever sin prepares the way for him, he comes on with steady, determined, unwavering, and unerring steps, till with one terrible stroke, he removes and brings the criminal into the immediate presence of the Judge eternal. Who has not dreaded this enemy, and who shall not grapple with

him? and who that is truly wise will not consider the means of victory over him?

THE GRAVE IS OUR ENEMY. It completes the work of the destruction of the body which death began. It dissolves the mortal fabric and mingles human flesh with the dust from which it was formed: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." It brings those bodies of which we took such care, lest a breath of air should injure them, or the least hurt befal them, into an alliance, the most close and intimate, with all that is base and humiliating! "I have said to corruption, Thou art my father, and to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister." What an enemy is this! what a subjugation is here!

Christians, as well as worldly men, have to do with these enemies. The grave is "the house appointed for all living." Christians, like others, must die; "it is appointed to men once to die." Christians have sin dwelling in them, and Christians are transgressors of God's holy law, and as transgressors justly exposed to its penalty.

How important then is it for us all to know the way of conquering these enemies! Let us then consider,

2. THE CONQUEST OVER THESE ENEMIES.

God "giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Jews expected a conquering Messiah: but they looked with the eye of the carnal mind—and hoped for one who would subdue the Romans, deliver them from earthly foes, and raise them to the highest degree of worldly greatness, exalting them to be the chief among the nations. O how poor such a victory only! How little such triumphs merely! How wretched might their nation have been, had their expectations of earthly greatness been fulfilled; while Pharisaic pride and self-righteousness, and Sadducean infidelity and sensuality were left unconquered, and thus they were still in bondage under their worst and most serious enemies! Our Saviour told them of a better deliverance: "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Jesus Christ is a conquering Saviour, but he has contended not with man's merely obvious, but with his real enemies. He has blotted "out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross ; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." (Col. ii. 14, 15.)

As TO THE LAW OF GOD—he suffered to the very uttermost all its righteous penalties, enduring its extreme curse in our place. For this end "he was made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law ;" and this work he fully accomplished: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us : for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (Gal. iii. 13.) But he had not only to recover us from under the law as an enemy, but to make that law our friend, our justifier, our title to life eternal : and this he also accomplished. "Think not," he says, "I am come to destroy the law or the prophets ; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For, verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matt. v. 17. 18.) He wrought out a perfect righteousness by an exact conformity of life to every requirement of the Divine law ; and this righteousness in our nature is available before God for man. By him God can receive sinful man, and believing in him, we can delight in God ; by faith righteousness is imputed to us also. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth."

As to SIN, he extracted that deadly sting with which this our chief enemy wounds and destroys. God "hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him ; he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. He himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree, and his blood cleanseth from all sin." And not only has he removed the guilt of sin, but he has broken its power, and made it hateful to the believer, who now, by the grace of Christ, delights

"in the law of God after the inner man," and by the power of the Spirit, is enabled to mortify sin, and grow in grace and holiness.

As to DEATH also, the Christian's conquest is and shall be complete. Jesus our Redeemer came to "deliver those who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." It was his gracious determination, "I will redeem them from death : O death, I will be thy plagues." (Hosea xiii. 14.) Hence, he has changed the very character of death. It is now to fall "asleep in Jesus," (Acts vii. 60) ; "to die is gain, (Phil. i. 21.) It is numbered among our privileges. (1 Cor. iii. 22.) And so far from being a terror to the believer, in his best state of mind, he says, "I desire to depart, and be with Christ." It unveils to him more of the now invisible reality of all his hopes. How shall I describe it? My brethren, it is the friendly hand that draws aside the veil of flesh which hides from us the Saviour. Death discovers to us more of Immanuel, and leads us where we shall be with him for ever ; and, when he has fully executed all his offices, death shall himself be cast into the lake of fire, and destroyed for ever. Jesus dying and entering in his own person the regions of the dead, "through death has destroyed him that hath the power of death, that is the devil," and has lighted up all the gloomy vale ; he also goes with his people when they pass through the valley, so that they need "fear no evil."

As to THE GRAVE, true it is "the house appointed for all living," but the Saviour penetrated its recesses. His own body lay in the silent tomb, that the grave itself might be sanctified to every one of his followers. He undertook our cause against this enemy ; "I will ransom them from the power of the grave—O grave, I will be thy destruction." (Hosea xiii. 14.) And now what is the grave but the seed-plot or nursery which prepares the body sown in it for a beautiful and glorious resurrection. True, it may seemed buried, and for a season lost ; but it shall "revive as the corn," and come forth, no longer a vile,

but a glorious body, to flourish for ever in the courts of our God.

O blessed Jesus, what tongue can tell our obligations to thee ! How wonderful thy love ! all thy people's enemies are subdued by thee, and what shall separate us from thy love ! In all our troubles "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." And the Apostle who says this, adds the blessed assurance—"I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

3. For whom the conquest is made. It is made for all men ; (Isaiah liii. 6.) true believers in Christ Jesus receive it, and obtain its fruit. The Apostle had been dwelling on the resurrection of the righteous. He is speaking simply of those who are united to Christ by a living faith, and one with him. The unconverted, through their love of sin and consequent unbelief partake not of this victory ; they remain under the power of their spiritual enemies. Our victories over the varied temptations of this world are obtained by faith in Jesus. "Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." It is by the same faith we gain our great victory over that everlasting destruction which we had merited by our sins. "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." And so it is in all of her spiritual conquests ; it is only the believer who really adopts the words of our text ; or that triumphant expression, "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Believe and you shall live.

It is of faith, that it might be by grace. Faith is from the operation of the Divine Spirit in the heart of man. (Ephes. i. 19.) Faith cordially credits the divine testimony concerning the Saviour, and receives him as revealed in the word, and wholly relies upon him. This faith is "the faith of God's elect," (Titus i. 2.) whom God "hath from the beginning chosen to salvation through

sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thess. ii. 13.)

Faith gratefully welcomes the rich blessings, which Jesus has procured for us. Pure water from the fountain is not more refreshing to the thirsty man, than are the conquests of Jesus over spiritual enemies to the soul wearied and burdened by sin. There is a finished and complete salvation in the Lord Jesus for the worst of sinners: there is a full victory over man's mightiest enemies. Faith says, 'I believe the Divine declaration. I know my God would not, could not deceive me. I venture therefore my everlasting interest, my all through eternity, on Jesus. I cast my sinful soul on Him, on Him alone for complete salvation.'

Oh, unbelievers, the enemies we have mentioned are yet to you in their full strength. The Law condemns you; sin is proved upon you; the sting of death has all its sharpness: the grave is to you like the prison door, through which you will be led to a shameful and finally ruinous execution. Ah! I fear lest, after all that has been declared among you, that to some within these walls death and the grave are still as if they were unvanquished enemies, who retain their dominion. The penalty of the Law is over you, sin in all its fascinating fatal power enchains you. You will not believe God's love to you, though so plainly expressed. You have not fled to Jesus, and where else can the sinner find one ray of true hope! O that I could prevail with you, now at length to sue for pardon! Once again I make known to you, that there is a proclamation of grace and mercy to all sinners: there is a full and free pardon for the most wicked. Oh let the wicked forsake his way! I come in the Divine Saviour's name; by his authority, I am commissioned to address you. By virtue of the office entrusted to me, I once more declare in your ears the fulness of redeeming love—the completeness of the salvation in Jesus—the free forgiveness through him of all sin—and the promised gift of the Holy Spirit to all that ask in his name. I

earnestly, I affectionately call you to come to Christ. "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Not one of you within the sound of my voice will be able in the great day of judgment to say that the rich grace of the Gospel was not set before you, that an invitation was not made to you, that a plain declaration of salvation by grace through faith was never proclaimed in your ears, that there was not in Christ for you all things pertaining to life and godliness. O hear, and your soul shall live.

Believers in Christ, you feel that it is for sinners, even for you the conquest has been made. My office is to comfort you. "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God ; speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned." (Isaiah xl. 1, 2.) If the prophets had so to address the Jews, how much more may we speak to you in similar language ! Look at the triumphs of your Saviour. All enemies shall be put under his feet. However broken and burdened you may be, though weak as a bruised reed, however small the spark of Divine grace, even as the smoking flax, rely on the faithful promise, "a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory ; and in his name shall the Gentiles trust." (Matt. xii. 20, 21.) We hope that many here can with truth and feeling say "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory."

4. THE PRAISE TO BE GIVEN FOR THIS VICTORY.

"Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory."

If we attain the victory, it was not our choice, but God's grace, that made us to differ from others. It was not our native good disposition, it was not our native free will, it was not our better discernment and superior excellence that led us to seek and receive these blessings. Oh ! we should have forfeited them over and over again, if left to ourselves. We should have spurned them from us as of no value, or only an insult to our pride and self suffi-

ciency. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his mercy he saved us. It is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

I know that the experience of the Christian coincides with what I say when I thus speak. I may appeal, beloved brethren in Christ, to your own consciences, that you have a feeling corresponding to that which I express, when I say, that it was not our good-will, our goodness, our natural choice, that led us to embrace the overtures of mercy; rather we disliked the free grace as offensive to our pride, we hated the purity of the gospel as contrary to our lusts, and nothing but our absolute necessity, as discovered to us by the teaching of the Spirit, led us to come, if we have come, as poor helpless sinners, for free and complete salvation. We then can say, with the apostle, "Thanks be to God. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."

And surely, my brethren, the Christian life is one of constant thanksgiving. Oh! when we contemplate our totally ruined state; when we see what we have justly merited by our multiplied acts of rebellion; when, even after we have known the way *of righteousness*, (2 Pet. ii. 20.) we cannot but be deeply sensible how often have we walked unworthy of our high vocation; how ungrateful have we been, how forgetful of God; how often we have backsliden from him; how cold are our affections, and how dull our services at the best; that while God is daily loading us with benefits, we have a rebellious and revolting heart, and he pities us, and spares, and pardons, and receives us again into the embraces of his love, and lifts up the light of his countenance upon us; surely our hearts must be touched with all this love. We cannot but feel the force of the passage, "I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord, that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I

am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done." (Ezek. xvi. 62, 63.) What but infinite and everlasting love could bear with such sinners as we are! And then when we view the wonderful deliverance provided for us, that it is all of sovereign grace—that it is affected in that all-wondrous and surprising way of God's not sparing his own Son, but sending him to be born, to grow up, to live and to die for us—when we consider yet further what the blessings are which he has procured for us: the returning favour of God, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and not only deliverance from, and victory over sin and death, the grave and hell, but blessings far above calculation or expression, in likeness to God, and in the sight, and glory, and enjoyment of God, in bliss unutterable throughout eternity ; O once believe this and the fire will kindle within, and your hearts will burn with grateful emotion, and you will burst forth in the expressions of Paul, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ ;" (1 Cor. xv. 57.) or in those of David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name." (Psalm ciii. 1.)

O my brethren, I long to see you all partakers of the enjoyment of these happy and grateful feelings ; in everything giving thanks ; and constrained by gratitude and love to live to him who poureth his benefits so richly around you. May the Divine Spirit raise every one of you to this blessed state of mind.

# SERMON XVI.

## CHRISTIAN STEDFASTNESS.

1 CORINTHIANS XV. 57, 58.

*Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

WE proposed to consider, 1. The victory given to the believer; 2. The practical influence which it should have; and 3. The certain recompence of all our labour.

In considering the victory given to the believer, I pointed out,—1. Our enemies: 2. The conquest over them; 3. For whom the conquest is made; and 4. To whom the praise is to be given.

The victory of Christ is the grand motive to Christian stedfastness. The word *therefore*, in our text, shews that there is a close connexion between the victory and the practical influence. What is the effect so great a victory should have upon us; what should be the influence of such amazing love? "therefore be ye stedfast." The word *therefore* connects this passage with the whole preceding chapter. It is like a burning-glass, which collects the sun's rays into a narrow compass, and thus increases their intensity and vigour. The Apostle had in the preceding

part of the chapter insisted upon, and illustrated the resurrection of believers. He had stated how the whole face of nature shewed the possibility of our resurrection ; he had declared the connection between the resurrection of Christ, and that of his people ; he had shewn how the martyrdom of Christians confirmed the same doctrine. By the figure of one star differing from another star in glory, he had further explained its glorious character. He had beautifully contrasted our fallen body with that spiritual and incorruptible body that should be raised from the grave. He had lastly pointed out the victory which Christ had obtained for us over all our enemies. And he now brings all the force of these various considerations to bear on this one point : Seeing that there is such a resurrection—that there is such a glory before you—that it is so confirmed—that there are such triumphs to be shared : be stedfast, unmoveable, and always abound iu the work of the Lord."

And to the force of persuasive eloquence, he joins all the tenderness of love, when he says, *my beloved brethren.*

It is not a common expression. St. Paul to the Philippians uses similar words ; generally it is, *brethren, my brethren,* but here carried away by the magnitude of the subjects which he had been considering, and urged on by the strength of his affection for the Corinthians, he uses the most tender terms to constrain them, by love, to Christian stedfastness.

It is by this motive also that I do especially desire to influence you to this important duty. By all the affection that has subsisted between us as minister and people, by all those endearing seasons which we have had in assembling ourselves together for public worship ; by our communion meetings before the Lord's Supper ; and our communion together with our common Saviour at that holy table : I exhort you, be " stedfast, unmoveable, and always abound in the work of the Lord." Sure I am, that in seeking to quicken you to this, I aim at your highest happiness. Sure I am, that when we meet, as I trust many of us shall meet, in a happier world, you will

not then think I over-estimated the importance of the duty to which I now call you. But let us proceed to consider,

II. THE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE which the victory, given to believers, should have upon them.

"Be ye stedfast, and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Here are three things; stedfastness, unmoveableness, and abounding labours.

1. STEDFASTNESS.

This seems more immediately to refer to personal constancy, in maintaining our Christian profession against assaults from our corrupt nature within, as *unmoveable* does to assaults from without. O my brethren, when I look at the many attacks to which you are exposed, in an ensnaring world, from a subtle adversary and from a corrupt heart, if I have any desire for your best interest, I cannot but press the exhortation, *Be ye stedfast.*

*Be stedfast in maintaining the doctrines of the Gospel.* The doctrines which I have preached, have exhibited the sovereignty and equity of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in all his dealings! his infinite tenderness, his unspotted purity and holiness, and his boundless love; they have shown you our total ruin by nature and through sin! the divine counsel planning salvation before time began, and in the fulness of time accomplishing the redemption of a lost world by Christ Jesus; the election of God's chosen people in Christ unto holiness, before the foundation of the world; their regeneration by his Spirit, and their free justification through his blood, adoption into the family of God, sanctification by the Spirit, manifested in the life of faith, hope, and love; preservation to the end, by the power of God through faith; resurrection from the dead at the coming of the Lord, the future judgment, the condemnation of the wicked to hell, and the admission of the righteous to heaven. The doctrines have been those for which the martyrs were burned at the stake, which our reformers sealed with their blood and have embodied in the Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies of our Church. Now

I exhort you to a stedfast adherence to these doctrines. As the Apostle exhorts the Colossians, so would I exhort you : "Continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope which ye have heard,... but as ye have received Christ Jesus, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith." (Col. i. 23 ; ii. 6, 7.)

As the first Christians *continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine*, (Acts ii. 42.) so do you continue stedfast in the same doctrine. It is my hearty desire and prayer that none of you may fall away from the love of the truth ; it is my fervent wish for you, that you may hold fast the profession of faith without wavering. O, it is affecting to see those, who once did run well, hindered by some worldly lust, declining and drawing back even to perdition. "Thou standest, O Christian, by faith. Be not highminded, but fear."

Be stedfast in Christian fellowship. The first Christians continued stedfast, not only in the Apostles' doctrine, but also in the Apostles' "fellowship and breaking of bread and prayers." I believe many of you have known this holy and happy communion, and I can address you as "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." (Ephes. ii. 19.) O continue in that holy fellowship. I believe that a truly Christian fellowship has existed among us : a fellowship which has been greatly promoted by our religious societies, our schools, and missionary and district visiting society meetings, and more especially by our monthly communion meetings. Let these meetings be increased, rather than diminished ; but especially let the love of all, one towards each other, increase and abound more and more.*

* The beautiful prayer in the Communion Service is peculiarly adapted to to the occasion when it is offered, and is so suited to this part of the subject, that I cannot but quote it.

Almighty and everliving God, we most heartily thank thee for that thou dost vouchsafe to feed us, who have duly received these holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, and dost assure us thereby of thy favour and goodness towards us, and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of thy

Be stedfast too in CHRISTIAN CONVERSATION. I beseech you, decline not from the holy practice of the gospel of Christ. We so soon slip into habits of worldliness, or self-indulgence, or display! But "as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; and walk worthy of your high vocation." Often refresh your minds with a view of the triumphs and victories of Christ and the glory to which he will exalt you, not to kindle an unholy pride, but to animate your endeavours after a conversation "becoming the Gospel of Christ." The Christian is eminently seen in his holy, meek and loving, and humble tempers, in the laborious and diligent discharge of his varied duties, and in his patient continuance in well-doing. He joins together apparently opposite things, speed and patience, fulfilling the direction, "let us run with patience the race that is set before us:" and diligence in his worldly business, with devotedness to God, "not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

2. UNMOVEABLENESS.

This refers to the various outward assaults with which the Christian's graces will be tried. Many temptations will befal him. You must as Christians go through trouble, and trouble on account of your religion. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." You will be assailed by threatenings and hard words, and cruel mockings, perhaps from those you love most strongly; you will be allured, on the other hand, more powerfully, by smiles and kindness. Let not faith fail. Our faith can easily begin and go a little way, but when we meet with trials and persecutions for "the word's sake, bye and bye, we are offended." Peter's faith enabled him to go on

Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people; and are also heirs, through hope, of thy everlasting kingdom, by the merits of the most precious death and passion of thy dear Son. And we most humbly beseech thee, O heavenly Father, so to assist us with thy grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works, as thou hast prepared for us to walk in; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen."

the sea, but it did not stand the buffeting of the winds and the swelling of the waves, he would have sunk, but for the helping hand of his Saviour.

Guard against novelties in religion, while you seek to grow in the knowledge of Christ. "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein; and ye shall find rest for your souls." When I notice the reply to this, "they said, We will not walk therein," and look at the peculiar character of the present day, I feel it my duty here especially to warn you.* There will always be novelties in religion; but remember the apostolic direction. "Be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." All the great truths of religion are old and known. The Bible is the treasury of all truth. The main truths for salvation are contained in the confessions of every Protestant church, and have been, from age to age attested by the blood of martyrs. It has been my aim to preach them in season and out of season; the substance is salvation by the grace of Christ through faith unto holiness, and I would adopt the apostle's words, as far as I have preached the gospel of Christ: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." As I said before so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you, than that ye have received let him be accursed." For if he who spreads poison under the name of healing medicine, and destroys the bodies of men without number, be an abomination, how much more he who poisons the soul with falsehood. "Take heed then that no man deceive you," as our Lord has told you, adding, "for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many." (Matt. xxiv. 4, 5.) Try every thing by the word of God, let your mind yield wholly to the sacred record, only

* Some remarks on this direction of the Bible are given in the Author's Practical Guide to Prophecies, 5th Edition, p. 279—282.

pray much that the Spirit may "guide you into all truth," and that you be not deceived by the subtility of Satan, who "is transformed into an angel of light, and whose ministers also are transformed into the ministers of righteousness." (2 Cor. xi. 14, 15.)

3. ABOUNDING LABOURS.

"Always abounding in the work of the Lord."

The Apostle does not mean that any good works are more than we ought to do; the Bible knows nothing of works of supererogation! but he means a holy diligence, and an abundant fruitfulness in every good word and work.

Now notice the work of the Lord, and the abounding in that work.

The WORK OF THE LORD is whatever our Saviour Christ calls us to. The first part of it is to attend to our everlasting interests. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." (Matt. vii. 33.) "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat that endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you." (John vi. 17.) God's glory and your own salvation are your first interests. And here forget what is behind, and reach forth to what is before, and "press with all eagerness towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iii. 16.) In this work faith is a leading part. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (John vi. 29.) Faith shews us God's love to us and leads us to happiness in God. Then follows love. "Faith worketh by love." The work of the Lord must all spring from, and be animated by love. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Luke x. 27.) These principles alone will lead you faithfully to fulfil your duties towards your fellow-creatures; and, acting on these principles, there is not one duty, however humble, in which you are not doing the work of the Lord. When the Apostle speaks of servants obeying

their masters, he says, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ." (Col. iii. 23, 24.) O Christians! what a glory this sheds around all your daily labours; Christ regards all as serving him. "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world," (James i. 27.) is another part of this work. Labouring also for advancing the kingdom of Christ, and all efforts to diffuse his gospel, come under this character. St. Paul tells Timothy in the next chapter, "Timothy worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do." (1 Cor. xvi. 10.) So again atteution to means of grace. I beseech you, neglect not prayer and reading the Scriptures, self-examination, and observing the sabbath-day. Such is the work to which our God calls us; he is your rightful Lord and Master; yield then a cheerful and glad obedience to Him, it is your highest wisdom, honour, and happiness.

But what is THE ABOUNDING IN THIS WORK?

The Scriptures dwell much on this. St. Paul not only here, but often elsewhere, presses it. He tells the Thessalonians, "We beseech you, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more:" and he prays for them, "the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and toward all men." (1 Thess. iii. 12; iv. 1.) St. Peter enters into more particulars, "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity; for if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Peter i. 5—8.) Brethren, a Christian's life is no idle life; he is full of plans and efforts to do good. He should not need to be stirred up, but himself should stir up others. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see

your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. v. 16.) The expression *always* should not pass unnoticed,—always abounding. At all seasons, in youth, in middle life, and old age, in health and sickness, in poverty and riches, in trouble and prosperity; each season has its appropriate work in which the Christian should abound to the glory of his heavenly master. The Christian will always have work enough to do, and need never find time hang heavy upon him, but rather will hardly find the day long enough for his work. Brethren, I call you always to be zealously affected in a good thing; never yield to a slumbering, drowsy, negligent way of getting through your work, but gird up your minds to a steady, diligent, hearty fulfilment of all your Christian duties.

And, do you ask how all these are to be discharged? I tell you frankly, you have no strength of your own, you have no sufficiency in yourselves: but you have sufficient grace in the Lord Jesus, and "can do all things through Christ strengthening you." (Phil. iv. 13.) Then shall you be "stedfast and unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord," when you are "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Only seek help of God: when the Apostles were threatened by the Jewish council, and forbidden to speak in the name of Jesus, I am struck with their conduct, they do not even ask for safety and protection, their prayer is, "Now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word." (Acts iv. 29.) Here is the true source of the Christian's strength, to do and to suffer the will of God. Wait only on the Lord.

Do you want motives? consider,

## III. THE CERTAIN RECOMPENSE OF ALL OUR LABOURS.

"Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

It is the grand and animating spring of all exertion,

that there should be an adequate return for our labour But how often in worldly things are men's hopes disappointed ! the tradesman lays out his capital, and time, and talents ; and then his hopes, after all, of earthly remuneration may be disappointed. But in the service of Christ, "your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

Nor does this recompense in any way interfere with salvation by grace. It is not on the ground of merit in man, but mercy in God. The more we do for God, the more we owe to God, and therefore for all our works we are rather debtors than deservers. But O how wonderful is that grace which first disposes and enables us to work, and then rewards us for working ! (Psalm lxii. 12.)

It was to the "recompense of the reward that Moses had respect, when he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." (Heb. ii. 26.) This supported the Apostles in all their afflictions, and comforted the martyrs in the flames.

What is the return then that Christians receive for their stedfast labours ? There is a present recompense, and a future recompense.

A PRESENT RECOMPENSE. No act of love to Christ goes without even a present recompense. David says, speaking of God's commands, "in keeping them, there is great reward." (Psalm xix. 11.) There is an inward peace of mind and satisfaction that is its own reward, and not unfrequently temporal blessings follow a Christian life ; the specific object of our labours is realized, and we see with our own eyes the blessed effects of devotedness to Christ ; for "godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come." We admit that, in God's sovereign wisdom and love, heavy afflictions are connected with the Gospel. The Apostles went through such temporal afflictions, that they said, "If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable." But even in the troubles of the believer such rich spiritual blessings are given, patience and resignation, faith, hope, love, and humility grow and increase so much, as to make

the Christian say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted: As sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as having nothing and yet possessing all things." The sweet sense of pardon and peace, the near access to God, and the communion with him in suffering times, have been such as to make many a suffering Christian bless God for the cross, as his greatest mercy. And O what an anchor of the soul is the hope of salvation! For it must be added, "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.) Consider then,

THE FUTURE RECOMPENSE.

The expressiou is here, as is very usual with the sacred writers, of a general kind. The Apostle tells the Hebrews in a similar manner, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which ye have shewn towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. So our Lord says, Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." The expressions of a rccompense are quite general. He does not enter into any minute description of the crowns of life and glory which they wear, or the bliss they shall enjoy. If you ask what this future recompense is, I reply, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." To me, my brethren, these expressions convey infinitely richer ideas of the heavenly reward, than if every word of bliss and glory that human language can invent or multiply, had been employed to describe it. It is a glorious happiness of perfect knowledge, purity, and joy. It is to be like God, and to be ever with him: and the Bible tells you no more about it, bccause it is inconceivably great and glorious.

O glorious rccompense, everlasting, incorruptible, and undefiled: may you, my brethren, attain it! O that I

may but be helpful in bringing any of you to desire and to seek it ! It is not a vain thing, it is your life.

Nor need the real Christian have a doubt here ; the Apostle says, "forasmuch as ye *know :*" so in another place he says, "We *know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Cor. v. 1.) Christians may have, and should have, a present assurance of hope of their future recompense. They have the earnest of their heavenly inheritance in the gifts of the Spirit here below ; by that Spirit they are sealed unto the day of redemption, and soon, very soon, they shall have the full sight and enjoyment of the promised reward.

All this is "in the Lord," as every promise is "yea and amen in Christ Jesus." It is for his sake, through his mediation, and to his glory ; and well may an assurance founded on Christ, be solid. "Whoso believeth in him, shall never be confounded." If the assurance rest ultimately on anything short of the Lord Jesus, it is not built on the true foundation.

I have now, my brethren, for several Sundays been pleading with you on the most important of all events. Your increasing interest and attention fill me with hope that my labours may have been profitable to you. O that in the last great day it may be found that one and another may have been impressed, and convinced, and converted, truly converted to God : and that when the Lord shall then number his people, it may be said of our Zion, "this and that man was born in her." (Psalm lxxxvii. 5.)

We shall not see much more of each other in this world. This voice will but seldom again reach your ears. O unconverted sinner, going on in thy worldly course, with my last breath would I entreat thee to pause and return to the Lord. O my beloved brethren in the Lord, my joy and crown, with my last breath I would beseech you, be "stedfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord."

# SERMON XVII.

## FIRST FAREWELL SERMON.

### 2 CORINTHIANS XIII. 11.

*Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.*

INTERESTING and endearing has been our connexion as minister and people ; now for about fourteen years I have ministered here, and this has hitherto been the only cure of souls that I have had since God called me to the ministry. You have borne with my many infirmities, and my frequent absences ; you have gathered around me, and strengthened my hands in every good work, and many a grateful recollection, the review of our past intercourse revives. To sever these ties is one of the sorest trials which I feel in my present situation and prospects.

To sever them—no—I feel that they never can be severed ! The past will still afford sweet reflections in this world. I do trust also, it will have been found to be, to many of you, profitable not only for time, but both for time and eternity. Ties have been here cemented between us, which will last for ever. Time is short, eternity is at hand, and all earthly separations are but for a moment.

I cannot however but entertain the hope that such a season

as the present may be improved to your spiritual advantage ; and in this hope I would bend my whole aim to further your highest good, and for this purpose I have chosen the valedictory address of the apostle to the church at Corinth. Let us consider,

1. THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH IT WAS MADE.
2. THE PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS IT CONTAINS.
3. THE PARTING GOOD WISH IT EXPRESSED.
4. THE PROMISE WITH WHICH IT CONCLUDES.

1. THE CIRCUMSTANCES in which this parting address was made.

Corinth was a great and rich city, the capital of Achaia, with an extended commerce. It was one of the most considerable cities of Greece, and given up to idolatry and vain pleasures. The apostle had received one of the most encouraging assurances from the Lord, "I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city." (Acts xviii. 10.) And thus encouraged he laboured there about two years ; a flourishing church of Christ was formed ; which came behind no church in spiritual gifts, being "enriched by Him in all utterance and in all knowledge." (1 Cor. i. 5.)

But after the apostle's departure, false teachers crept in ; heresies and divisions spread amongst them : some fell into sin ; one into grievous iniquity : the Lord's Supper was grossly profaned, and there was danger lest this lately flourishing church should speedily decline and become corrupt. The apostle writes two divinely-inspired epistles, full of heavenly wisdom and holy affections, to recover them, and to be a standing instruction for the whole church of God in after ages ; he closes his second epistle with the parting address which we have now to consider.

Though many of your circumstances are different, yet there are points of similarity of which I would avail myself. I will first present to your attention the circumstances of Christian congregations in great cities, and then the circumstances of the times in which we live.

1. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF CONGREGATIONS IN GREAT CITIES are such as to be attended with many snares to the soul. There is the wear and tear of constant, bustling, distracting and multiplied occupations, with the little time that can be gained for the all-important duty of calm, retired, and close communion with God and our own hearts.

The general mass of the population of such a city as this is wholly immersed in the world and the things of the world : "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," (1 John ii. 16.) are those things which mainly occupy the thoughts and cares of its inhabitants. O it is fearful to look at the congregated amount of a million and a half of men here assembled within a few miles of each other, and to be satisfied on palpable evidence, that a great, if not the greater part, neglect public worship, and thus live as without God in the world. How immense are the multitudes of men of this world here acting upon each other : exciting, irritating, fretting, and corrupting each other more and more. Here is the chief seat of infidelity of England : its most vain-glorious, daring and blasphemous advocates here strengthen each other by uniting together under Satan, their chief, for the destruction of man. Here the Romanist also can securely entrap and beguile unstable souls with all the arts of "the mother of abominations." Here the ambitious have full scope and play in every department of life for applying all their talents and resources to obtain the pageant of this world's greatness and glory. Here the covetous may especially *rise up early and late take rest*, and accumulate his miserable idols, this world's gold and silver, till death take all from him, and he shall carry nothing away with him but the canker and the rust to witness against him. Here also the literary may pursue, to the utmost limits of human research, studies after the wisdom of this world. In fact all who love this world, have in this vast metropolis, the seat of their empire ; and their minds and cares, and conversation, are wholly engrossed by the continual and

busy occupation which their accumulated numbers and advantages here give them.

Now the flock of Christ is a little flock in the midst of all this worldliness. Bought by the blood of Jesus, called by his grace out of this evil world, and quickened by his Spirit, his people *come out and* are *separate* from a world lying in wickedness. Like the burning bush seen by Moses, it is preserved by Divine power, in the midst of the flames, unconsumed. This church is in truth the salt that preserves the whole from destruction. O brethren, may you ever be as "the salt of the earth," (Matt. v. 13.) and may this salt never lose its savour. O may you never even for a season be again incorporated with and become like that mass of worldliness from which you have been taken. Rather may you be honoured of God in turning many around you from darkness to light, that they also with you may obtain an inheritance among them that are sanctified.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE TIMES ARE PECULIAR.

My brethren, we live in remarkable times; one of those æras which may well be called critical. Just as the times when the apostles first diffused the gospel of Christ, or when the Reformation revived the gospel, were each a crisis, so is the present day a crisis in the history of the world. God has been marvellously at work, stirring up his people to enlarged efforts to diffuse his gospel; and Satan has been marvellously at work intending to hinder, yet unconsciously, or at least by unwilling constraint, helping forward, the triumphs of the gospel.

Yet is there much in the church, and in the world, that may appal the stoutest heart, and lead to deepest humiliation and prayer.

Many of us can remember the outbreaking of the first French revolution, and the changes it produced throughout Europe. We have lived to see a second revolution, still more portentous in its signs, and likely in its progress to affect every civilized nation. It is manifest that the foundations of the earth are out of course, the pillars of it

are tottering, and God is shaking every thing, and uprooting the ancient things, that that kingdom which cannot be shaken may be established. God is using implements which he will lay aside when they have accomplished his work. We see the loosening of the soil about every plant —we see the trembling and waving of the deeply-rooted trees of evil, and we are sure that our Lord's word must be realized. Popery, infidelity, Mahomedanism, paganism, superstition, merely nominal Christianity, and in the words of Christ, "every plant that my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." We have the character of the last times, which we see before our eyes predicted in God's word. (2 Tim. iii. 1—5.)

And when, after taking this general view, we look at our own country in particular, the Christian's heart must feel that there is much to be anxious for, connected with the best interests of England.

The characteristic of our times is eminent ungodliness in men who yet bear the Christian name. In general they deny not the faith by open avowal of their unbelief; they call themselves Christians; but the very character of all their actions is "There is no God"—the very spirit which animates them is a throwing off of all authority and restraint, divine and human, saying, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." And these principles have spread to such an extent as to loosen all the former bonds of society—"there is no fear of God before their eyes."

We see this in some striking features. The Sunday newspapers, in thousands and tens of thousands, issue from the press, and in righteous punishment for the national sin of not restraining so great a violation of God's holy law, circulate principles of insubordination and contempt of authority, and diffuse the worst of poison, even poisoning the springs of men's actions; and if the fountain be bad, if the principles be corrupt, what else can be the streams?

The open avowal of infidelity is another painful feature.

Our more pious forefathers would indeed have been appalled that shops for the sale of avowed infidel publications should be opened and encouraged, that the Sabbath should have its lectures in infidelity, and that periodical infidel works should have free circulation and sale. Ought we not to be humbled ? Will not God visit for these things? *

Other features of the times might be noticed, but they have in a measure been more or less the characters of every age : the habits of drinking among the poor, the frauds in trade, the hardness of heart which calculates only the gain to be acquired, the pride, oppression, and dissipation of the higher ranks, and the insubordination, and deceit, and recklessness of the lower, however, form a mass of growing national iniquity that may well fill us with sorrow, and confusion of face before God.

The state of the church of Christ will also cause much anxiety to the considerate Christian.—Corinth itself had not the multiplied divisions and the contentions among brethren that London now has. I mean not among nominal Christians, nor among different denominations, but among Christians who profess to "*hold the head.*" It is painful indeed to see the multitudes that are carried away by every wind of doctrine, "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." (2 Tim. iii. 7.) Faith, hope, and love, the substance of all experimental truth, and Christ, even him crucified ; Christ, our light, our life and glory, the sum of saving knowledge, are neglected for things which tend to puff up the fleshly mind. Others again are carried away by the love of criticism, and new canons of interpretation into the very regions of infidelity. Hence also a dangerous reaction leading to the neglect of sound criticism, the despising of prophesyings,

* In former editions the following observations occur : "Another feature that may excite much anxiety is holding 800,000 of our fellow beings in slavery, darkness, and oppression. After all the light that has been thrown on this subject, I consider the guilt of England as not small, in still continuing unredressed so serious an evil. The Egyptians were destroyed for keeping in bondage the Israelites: and God grant us grace to deliver our slaves from bondage before our neglect calls down merited judgments upon us." Through great mercy, this national crime has been put away.

and shutting the mind against growth in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus, or attending to the sure word of prophecy.

When I look at these things, I am reminded of our Saviour's words to his disciples, and I would address them to you: "Will ye also go away?" I am afraid lest any, especially of the younger part of my flock, of whose ardent zeal and devotedness I have had many proofs, should be led away by those who, though pious men, hold and are zealous to propagate new theories in religion, as if there could be a superior way of life to the meek, contrite, humble, holy, and loving way arising from the Spirit's work on the heart, showing us our own depravity, and the Saviour's rich grace to all men, working in us faith in him by which we are justified, and then sanctified and made meet for heaven. I fear lest any should become heady and high-minded, trusting in themselves that they are the temple of the Lord, and despising others.

These are sifting times; men's hearts are failing them for fear of what is coming on the earth; they are exciting times, and Christians may be carried away with the excitement; but ever remember Christ's word's, "My kingdom is not of this world!" ever act on Solomon's direction, "My son, fear thou the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change." (Proverbs xxiv. 21.)

True it is that any thing is better than a general torpor and death in religion, and self-satisfaction in that torpor and death; and the very excitement of the present day shews that there is a great good going on; yet many peculiar temptations beset the Christian at such times, and those who would avoid them must walk closely with God, in devout, patient, constant study of his word, and in much prayer, waiting constantly upon him.

## II. THE PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS GIVEN.

"Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace."

Here are four plain practical directions. May the Lord enable me duly to set them before you.

BE PERFECT.

Be entire and complete. Be consistent throughout; a thorough Christian, walking worthy of the Gospel. This includes the whole practical walk of the Christian.

The root of this perfection is only in the Lord Jesus Christ and our union with him. As we are one in Christ, we are perfect. "Ye are complete in him." You are witnesses how constantly your minds have been directed to Him, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending. All your justification is in him who is made of God unto you righteousness. All your adoption is in him; "to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John i. 12.) All your sanctification is by him. "He is made of God unto us sanctification," (1 Cor. i. 30.) as the fulness of the Spirit was received by him for sinners, and is from him communicated to them, that they may be enlightened, purified, and comforted. Never can I regret having directed you simply to the Saviour for all you need; and had I a thousand tongues, they should all speak of Christ, and direct the hearers only to him. Now abide in him.

But, if you would be perfect, while God is working "in you to will and to do of his good pleasure," you must "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Phil. ii. 12, 13.) "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." (Col. ii. 6.) Nothing is more essential to your prosperity than maintaining habitual communion with God. My beloved brethren, I beseech you to seek God in private prayer, with all diligence and patient perseverance, every morning before you go to your business, and let not this all-important work be conducted carelessly and cursorily, but earnestly and steadily. And again in the evening, it is a bad habit to defer private devotions till a late hour, when usually men become heavy and sleepy. Many Christian families have found it a good

rule for the several members to retire at a fixed and early hour in the evening, for their more private devotions. The due and serious observance of family worship, including a hymn of praise, reading the scriptures, short observations upon the portion read, and a devout prayer, is another material part of the order of a religious household walking according to the rules of the gospel. The diligent, holy, watchful, and conscientious keeping of the Sabbath-day, is eminently needful for your soul's welfare; as is the regular attendance at the preparatory meetings, and at the monthly and other communions around the table of the Lord; seasons in which we have now so long together enjoyed fellowship with our Saviour, and fellowship with each other. O my brethren, be not slack and negligent in private preparation for those duties; your spiritual profit in them is greatly connected with previous diligence in retired duties, in holy meditation, self-examination, humiliation, prayer, and renewed exercises of faith. My prayer for you is this;—"the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to him be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Heb. xiii. 20, 21.)

BE OF GOOD COMFORT.

Are any of you cast down? I believe that some of you, knowing that there has been a remarkable blessing in the last year or two of my ministry here, and that institutions have been formed among us that have been greatly prospered, have been ready to fear that these things may not go on, when the instrument in some degree used, has been removed. But why despond? remember David's resource, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." (Psalm xlii. 11.) The same gracious God who makes use of what instrument he pleases, knows what

his garden needs, and if he lays one aside, or takes it for other work, it is only to raise another instrument that shall more completely accomplish his work. I would apply to you Jacob's consolation to Joseph ; though I remove, God does not. The dying Patriarch said, "I die, but God shall be with you, and bring you to the land of our fathers."

It pleased God to bless among you a sermon upon these words, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils : for wherein is he to be accounted of ?" Some I believe, remember that sermon : now you and I are called to practise in this instance the duty there prescribed. O it is good to look wholly off the poor creature, and to glory only in the Creator. And what grounds of comfort there are for you ! True, you are needy creatures ; the very fulness and extent of God's promises shew this, for there are no useless promises : but you cannot have a want for which there is not a supply in the promise ; you cannot have a fear, but there is a suitable encouragement.

Only look up to your heavenly Parent. O what inexpressible glories and riches and blessedness centre in Him as the ever-living and over-flowing fountain of all good : He has all wisdom and all truth, all power and all tenderness,—all holiness, and all compassion, all majesty and all love. With such a Father how can you despond ! Be of good comfort, God is your Father.

Only look up to the Lord Jesus Christ : *the brightness of his Father's glory*, (Heb. i. 3.)—your all in all. Do you feel that you are lost ? what a Saviour is here for the lost ! Do you feel that you are guilty ? what a Redeemer for the guilty ! Do you feel that you are sinful ? what a High Priest for the sinful ! Are you sensible of your ignorance ? O what a prophet and teacher for the ignorant ! Are you thinking that you are weak and defenceless ? O what a King you have ; the King of kings, fully able to protect all his people ! Be of good comfort, Christ is your Saviour. Or again, if you want grounds of comfort, only look up to the Holy Spirit. He is the very Comforter of the comfortless ; the teacher, the guide, the helper, the sanctifier of the

elect of God. Do you mourn under your corruption? O what a sanctifier is at hand to purify you! Do you feel your deadness? O what a quickening Spirit is the Divine Spirit! only pray with David, "Thy Spirit is good, lead me in the land of uprightness. Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake." (Psalm cxliii. 10.) He sanctifieth all the elect people of God.

Do you doubt if you are among his elect? Go to Jesus, and so make it sure. "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me." Do you think that he will not receive you; hear his assurance: "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." (John vi. 37.)

Do you fear that your sins cannot be pardoned? O yes, they can, whatever they be; "there is redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace:" if you go to Christ, and walk in this light of God's love, his blood "cleanseth from all sin:" "Come now, and let us reason together, Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isaiah i. 18.)

Do you doubt whether you shall persevere to the end? Were this left to yourself you might well doubt; but your soul is in better hands—even "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." (1 Peter i. 5.)

Do you feel the loss of earthly friends who have been a blessing to you? O think of Him who only made them to be any blessing, and who has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee; so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (Heb. xiii. 5, 6.)

But my heart is full, and I stop. May our God pour out his Spirit so fully upon you, that you may receive a rich blessing even in our parting sermons, and we may together devote ourselves from this day, afresh to his service. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us and hath given us an everlasting consolation and good hope through grace; comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." (2 Thess. ii. 16, 17.)

# SERMON XVIII.

## SECOND FAREWELL SERMON.

### 2 CORINTHIANS XIII. 11.

*Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace, shall be with you.*

I RESUME once more the consideration of St. Paul's address.

In the morning, I stated these points as included in our text. 1. The circumstances in which this farewell address was made ; 2. The practical directions given ; 3. The parting good wish expressed ; 4. The promise added. We have already dwelt on the first part of the subject, and have also explained two of the four practical directions given. I proceed with the third practical direction.

BE OF ONE MIND.

I must say, thanking God for this grace, that you have been remarkably so hitherto. It has been my joy and comfort to witness your unanimity. When I consider how many hindrances there are to this, how Satan delights to sow divisions among brethren, and how much corruptions in one heart tend to excite and stir up strife and contention in the hearts of many, I cannot but admire the grace of God which has united us together in the bonds of Christian love. I doubt not that God has much blessed our

Religious Societies to the furtherance of this, while he has given us a spirit of union in carrying them forward. Our District Visiting Society, formed under the sanction, and with the kind assistance of the rector of the parish, has brought us together on the interesting Christian duty of visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction. Our schools for religious instruction, our Infant School, our Missionary Association, and the other charities connected with our chapel, have had the same effect ; and in all, the Christian unity has been vouchsafed, disposing us to submit *one to another in the fear of God.* To God be all the glory. Now *let brotherly love continue.* Let the same spirit ever characterize all your intercourse with each other, and with the beloved brother who succeeds me.

For this end, come out from the world. Christians must now be more and more separate and distinct from an ungodly world. In the midst of all the scenes around of political and national excitement, lift up the standard of the cross ; be every where decided for Christ ! the more openly you confess him, the more peace will you have within, and the more useful you will be among your brethren. The more bold you are for Christ, in the spirit of Christ, and according to the word of Christ, the more you will gain the love of his true disciples, and no love in this world is comparable to theirs.

Above all, beware of ungodly connections. Let not any worldly advantages tempt you to unite yourselves in business with those who hate the gospel. Especially let me, as a parting caution, charge my younger hearers, never to unite themselves in marriage to those whom they have not good reason to believe to be truly converted to God. The scripture rule is express, " Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers ; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness ? and what concord hath Christ with Belial ? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel ?" Nothing has been more injurious to the soul, than ungodly connexions. Many a fair and beautiful blossom

that gave rich promise of fruit, has thus been withered and blighted. Make, then, those who love the Lord Christ the companions of your choice. You cannot go out of the world ; but while you are in it, be not of it. Learn the happy skill of the Christian, to live above the world while he labours in it. You must inevitably associate with worldly men, they abound on every side ; but, oh, as "strangers and pilgrims," only sojourn here, and "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." The more, however, Christians come out from needless connection with the world, the more intimate is their communion with God, and their union and communion with each other.

4. LIVE IN PEACE.

This is the last practical direction. The Christian is eminently a man of peace. Never was it more needful to state distinctly this character, to the church of Christ, from dangers on all sides : dangers, on the one hand, of giving up or withholding truth ; and dangers on the other hand, of speaking the truth not in love, but in pride and contention, or urging private opinions as if they were fundamental and all-essential truths of God. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." The directions on this head in the sacred scriptures are numerous. "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." (Matt. v.) "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." (Rom. xii. 18.) "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. xii. 14.) "Seek peace and ensue it." (1 Pet. iii. 11.) Our Lord and his apostles press this duty upon us, as if peace were ever ready in this perturbed world to escape from us, and we must daily pursue it : or in the words of St. Paul. "follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." (Rom. xiv. 19.)

It will be clear, however, even from these directions,

that peace is not to be desired at the expence of religious principle. This must be retained at all cost. Truth is never to be sacrificed for peace ; but *speaking the truth in love* is our happy duty. When ungodly men abuse the truths of the Gospel, we must "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." But frequently peace is needlessly brokeu for the gratification of some sinful passion, and it is to be maintained by the denial of self in all its many forms of self-will, self-indulgence, self-wisdom, ease, pride, and vanity. If we be true followers of peace, we shall often suffer wrongfully for the sake of peace—"If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye." (1 Peter iii. 14.) I need not tell you, my brethren, that Christians are "as sheep among wolves," and that their protection is not in an arm of flesh, but in the invisible arm of Jehovah. Be then men of peace, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." (Phil. ii. 14, 15.)

The root of this peace, and that indeed from which alone Christian peace can grow, is a conscience pacified through the blood of Jesus. If I have peace with God, if I know that the King of kings is my friend, and will make all things work for my good, it matters little what the unquiet spirits of this world do to disturb or harass me. He who can "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently on him," is fixed on an immoveable rock. "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."

The direction, Live in peace, is very comprehensive. It embraces, first of all, peace with God ; let this be maintained pure and clear—let there be nothing between God and you ; and for this end continually apply afresh to "the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel." (Heb. xii. 24.) There will then be peace within, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and which shall keep your hearts and minds through

Christ Jesus :" a sweet tranquillity of mind, calm amidst the storms and tempests of life, and composed, if not joyful, in tribulation. Peace with your brethren in Christ and all your fellow-creatures, has already been noticed; but this direction embraces also our enemies. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you." Here is the lesson of our Divine Master; and if enabled to attain this lesson, often will you find that "when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

O that the Redeemer's bequest to his church may be yours: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

## III. THE PARTING GOOD WISH EXPRESSED.

"Finally, brethren, farewell."

These are hard words to say where there is real love, as they imply to us absence and separation; and yet they are words full of comfort. The Christian's farewell, and the Christian minister's farewell more especially, is an expression full of hope and full of blessing. The original (χαιρετε) might be rendered "rejoice" or "be glad;" and as there is nothing which shall not minister a blessing to the child of God, so every thing may give him peace and joy. All things are in truth working for good. The meetings and partings, the absence and presence, of those dear to him, are all from the Lord, all in love, all for his good.

My circumstances call me to say farewell. May you indeed "fare well," both in body and in soul, in time and in eternity. The expression "farewell," comprehends my heart's wish and prayer for you all.

It includes EVERY NEEDFUL TEMPORAL GOOD. I would say to each of my brethren in Christ, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." May all providential dealings with you be full of loving-kindness and mercy. May our God "supply all your need out of his riches in glory

by Jesus Christ." May every temporal good, as far as is consistent with your higher and best good, be bestowed upon you. May our God realise in your happy experience those rich promises made to his people; "Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out." (Deut. xxviii. 3—6.) I am sure that if you do steadily and determinately "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all those things shall be added unto you." Devotedness to Christ is the wisest way to insure the largest measure of temporal happiness, for his "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace." Fare you well in this world's blessings.

It includes a good wish also for EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING: These are given to God's elect, making them a blessing to others, and preparing them for their heavenly home. O may you then, my brethren, all be greatly enriched with the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost! May the faith of each and of every one *grow exceedingly*, and your hope rise to the full assurance of hope, and your love towards God and towards each other, and to all men, be yet more enlarged and inflamed. May the Holy Ghost dwell in you, and ever produce in you all his multiplied and varied fruits. May you be filled with joy and peace, gratitude and thankfulness; may contrition, and humility, and compassion, and a tender conscience, mark all your characters, and may "the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Fare you well in spiritual good. May your souls prosper.

It includes a good wish also for ETERNAL BLESSEDNESS. All is infinitely short of your real happiness without this; but indeed spiritual blessings are the very meetness for heavenly and everlasting blessedness. You must be born again, before you can see the kingdom of God; you must

attain holiness, if you would see the Lord ; the title or way to glory is Christ's work, out of us ; the meetness for glory is from the work of the Spirit of Christ in us. Now "God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life." O my brethren, here is my chief, my best wish for you, that Christ may be formed in you the hope of glory, so that none of you may be wanting when God counteth up his jewels ; that you may all be bound up in the bundle of life everlasting, and that all your names may be written in the Lamb's book of life. I call you to "fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life." And Oh ! may our God give to us such growth in grace and holiness as may minister to each of us "an entrance abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

## IV. THE PROMISE ADDED.

*The God of love and peace shall be with you.* A rich promise ! O may it, in all its blessedness, be yours.

There is ever a connection between holy practice and holy joy—the ways of godliness are the ways of peace. The fulfilment of the practical directions which we have been explaining, will bring a richer enjoyment of the Divine presence, with all those inestimable blessings that presence ever brings. This is according to that gracious promise, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." (Matt. xiii. 12.) We have nothing without God, and where he gives one degree, it is a pledge to encourage us to hope for more. Attend to the practical directions, "Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace," and then shall follow the blessing : "the God of love and peace shall be with you." The due exercise of grace, which itself must be traced to sovereign and free love in God, brings more grace. The Holy Spirit loves to dwell in peaceful and tranquil bosoms : he is grieved and driven away when we admit angry contentions and unholy feelings to dwell in us and rankle in

our hearts. O take heed how you quench the Spirit—that holy, divine, and loving guest, that makes the body of the Christian the temple of God, from which the living waters are perpetually flowing!

To whom are we to look for the blessing? "The God of love and peace."

What a comfort is it, my brethren, to direct you hither! A mother on parting with her children to take a distant journey, feels it an unspeakable relief to be able to leave them with a kind and tender, with a skilful and watchful, with an able and confidential nurse or friend. And, my brethren, it is my greatest relief of mind, on leaving you, to be assured the God of love and peace shall be with you.

"The God of love!" What a title! "God is love." Love in its essence, source, and fulness. All other love is but derived from him; there is no love that is sweet, and delightful, and excellent, in the creature, but it is a ray from his beauty and glory. The love of parents to children, and children to parents, is very tender and endearing; the love of husbands to wives, and wives to husbands, is very entire and intimate and comforting; the love of minister and people is a bond of which I now more than ever feel the force and strength; but all these are little drops and streamlets. There is a full river of love proceeding from God. The fountain-head of all love is God himself. Oh the wonders of his love! It has heights beyond the starry sky, it has depths beyond those of the great deep; it has lengths and breadths further than from east to west or north to south. It passes knowledge. No tongue can fully declare it. Nor can one human being who knows that God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, for a moment reasonably doubt his love.

"The God of peace" also! Peace flows from love. He is "the author of peace, and lover of concord." And O how wonderfully has he displayed this character in the gospel of peace; "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their

trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation;" never then be tempted to look upon God as one who wills your destruction, as your hard master, or your bitter enemy. This false view of God, the great enemy and your fallen nature would ever lead you to take. But the gospel shews him to you not as your enemy, but as your reconciled Father, "who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." He will quiet every troubled bosom, he will calm every agitated thought: "He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still." I leave you in stirring and agitating times; men's minds are afloat and the elements of conflict are all around: "the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm;" but he also "stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of the waves, and the tumult of the people." To his people he is in all, "the God of peace," and the very signs of discord may be to you the emblems and tokens of the speedy approach of the Prince of peace. And if you want a refuge, O what a refuge is here, the God of peace! "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers and shut thy doors about thee, hide thyself as it were for a little moment until the indignation be overpast. For behold the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth also shall disclose her blood and shall no more cover her slain." But "the God of peace shall be with you.

But let us more particularly notice WHAT IT IS TO HAVE THE GOD OF LOVE AND PEACE WITH US?

With you in all situations and circumstances: with you in the congregation, whenever you assemble together. O may you be filled with Divine love and peace; the doctrines of love and peace continually proclaimed from the pulpit and felt in every bosom; the riches of love and peace exhibited in brightest colours in your public baptisms, and around the table of the Lord when commemorating his dying love. In all your religious meetings may the God of love and peace preside and abundantly manifest the sweet savour of his graces. In your families may

the same glorious Being condescend to dwell: even as if I said in each of your houses, "Peace be to this house," so from the heart would I say, the God of love and peace be in all your dwellings. Receive into your hearts also the same great inhabitant, and "the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

O my brethren, well may you spare the feeble light of a taper if you have the bright shining of the full Sun of glory; well may you part with a messenger, if you have his Master himself as your guest and friend. His omnipotence meets all your weakness; His omnipresence visits you in all your varied abodes: His exhaustless fulness of wisdom, love and riches will supply all your necessities. Wherever he is, there is a supply of all your varied needs. Your ministers are but earthern vessels, and can convey but a limited supply; all human aid is but as that derived from a cistern: you have a fuller, an inexhaustible source, for "my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." I commend you all to the God of love and peace.

Before I conclude, let me once more address the different classes before me. May these parting words be used of God, to the calling in of any of his sheep, or to the edifying of any of his people.

And first I address "the unconverted." Doubtless there are such here. In so crowded a congregation there must be those not truly converted to God. They may have heard and approved the truth, but they have never been turned from their sins. They have never experienced an entire inward change, and are not new creatures in Christ Jesus. They love the world and the things of the world; their treasure is in it, and their heart also. Once more then, let this voice reach your ears, and may the Holy Spirit send it home to your hearts—Turn ye, turn ye! Hear once more the gracious declaration of your God—"As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death

of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his ways and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel." I tremble at the thought of your condemnation. O how fearful is the very supposition, that when we meet again it may be before the judgment-seat, and that then, instead of your being my joy, I may be compelled to witness against you, and when I have to speak concerning you, to say, "Time after time I preached thy word to them, I warned them, I entreated them, I laid thy promises, O my God, before them, I made known thy threatenings to them, but they would not hear!" some of you, are, I fear, walking still in the ways of ruin; your conduct has not that which stamps the Christian. O, I also would speak, even with many tears, of those "whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." Once more I set before you Christ and his salvation: once more I invite you to come to Him: once more I tell you the Heavenly Father is ready to receive you, and Jesus to save you, and the Spirit to sanctify. God of all grace, grant, ere it be too late, they may come to thee. God of all grace, make these last words converting words to unconverted souls now before Thee!

Lastly, I address the CONVERTED, those to whom sin is grievous and Christ is precious; those who love his word, his day, his house, his ordinances, and his people. May grace, mercy and peace be multiplied unto you. "Ye are my joy and crown of rejoicing." I have good hope through grace that you will persevere. "We live if ye stand fast in the Lord;" these words express my inward feelings concerning you. May the Lord himself hold up your goings in his paths. Our past communion has been pleasant and profitable. Often our hearts have been touched, and melted, and comforted under the sense of God's presence and love; the glow of devotion has warmed our bosoms together; the praises of the Redeemer, like one volume of holy joy and admiration, have together ascended up to the Heavenly Habitation; but all that we have hitherto

enjoyed is but the foretaste of a more entire and more blessed communion. "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant." Soon shall we join that blessed company. Short indeed is the intervening time. But in that intervening time, may the bond of prayer still unite us; often may we meet at the throne of grace, and at length for ever sing together the praises of him "who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.—To him be glory and dominion for ever. Amen."

## SERMON XIX.

### THE LOVE OF GOD.

2 THESSALONIANS III. 5.

*The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God.*

THESE are the words of a spiritual Parent, who yearns with the utmost tenderness of affection over his spiritual children, longing for their highest happiness. He knows in what true happiness consists ; he has the deepest interest in the best welfare of his children ; and he pours out his heart in a fervent prayer to Him who alone can bring them to the enjoyment of this happiness, that he would bestow his richest grace upon them. With these desires I would bring this subject now before you. There is full happiness for you all in the gospel of Christ ; if you receive the light of God's truth, it is all yours ; and if I am instrumental in bringing you to partake of it, or quickening you in the truths you have received, I shall rejoice in the day of Christ, and be a participator of your joy for ever.

The whole prayer is, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." It is one of those apostolic benedictions, full of grace and blessedness, with which the epistles abound. And, as it is the peculiar office of the Holy Ghost to shed abroad the

love of God in the heart, many consider that we have here the triune Jehovah brought before us, in that fulness of grace with which Father, Son, and Holy Ghost have undertaken to bless us and do us good: the Holy Ghost directing our hearts into the enjoyment of the Father's love, and into the patient expectation of the coming and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The present happiness of sinful man is to have his heart divinely directed by the power of the Holy Ghost into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ. The Lord abundantly bless our consideration of this subject to your good.

And here notice,

1. THE NATURAL FEELINGS OF THE HEART TOWARDS GOD.
2. THE MIND OF GOD TOWARDS US.
3. THE HEART DIRECTED TO HIS LOVE.

## I. THE NATURAL FEELINGS OF THE HEART TOWARDS GOD.

Originally, as he was made, man was wholly upright, and delighted in the presence and service of God. But the moment that he sinned, fear, alienation, and enmity took possession of his heart! and now man is by nature born in sin and a child of wrath.

Notice his enmity against God, and his consequent misery.

1. *Man's enmity against God.*

In the blindness of our hearts we count God to be our enemy; or in the expressive language of the Bible, "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. viii. 7. In our extreme darkness we think that it would be a happy thing if there were no God to trouble us; and we were wholly independent; in short, that we ourselves were gods. Look closely and see if this be not the feeling of your heart,—a feeling which makes prayer burdensome, and connects every thing that brings God into your thoughts

with gloom ; leading you to view his commands as strict requisitions and severe laws, rather than as the path of happiness. This feeling is expressed in the reply of the servant who brought back the pound, " Lord, behold here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin ; for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man ; thou takest up that thou layest not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow." So in another case it is similarly expressed : " I knew thee that thou wast an hard man, and I was afraid and went and hid thy talent in the earth." (Matt. xxv. 24.) Under this feeling, men will do as little as they can for God ; just enough, as they think, to escape hell, and at last gain a safe admittance into heaven. Love to God is quite impossible to a man thus loving darkness.

Now this view of God is perfectly false and unjust, and wholly ungrounded : it is the devil's lie to keep us in captivity to him. Notice then farther,

2. *The consequent misery* of this enmity.

How can it be otherwise ? This feeling desolates the whole earth. The creature must be miserable when separated from the Creator ; and while the creature is thus miserable he places the fault every where but to its true cause. Oh ! says one, if I was relieved from this bodily infirmity, I should be happy. Oh ! says another, if I had not this perverse child, how joyfully would my days pass. Oh ! says a third, if it had not been for that fraud or loss, how prosperous a man should I have been ; I would have been quite contented. I am, it is true, now toiling in anxiety, but when I get such an earthly advantage, says another, then I will rest satisfied. O fools and blind of heart, whom no past experience will teach, and no observation of others, having the object of your desires, and yet miserable, can instruct. All earthly things, when sought instead of God, are broken cisterns that can hold no water. Sin curses all your comforts and worldly prosperity. Hence you are born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. All your days are consumed under God's wrath. How false and deceitful are all such vain notions. Your trials are the

voice of God's love, seeking to recal you to himself, in whom is your only true happiness; instead of being your worst things, they are really the very kindest things that could be sent to you. Without the presence, favour, and love of God, you cannot but be miserable.

Here is the true cause of your misery. It is not, as you deceive yourself by supposing, the want of more earthly advantages and comforts: had you the whole world without God's favour and love, you would be in darkness and misery. The root of your unhappiness is, that you are estranged from your wise, holy, good, and gracious Creator and God. You have forsaken the fountain of living waters. O be not deceived; no earthly creature can fill up the necessities of your soul. A good husband, a loving wife, dutiful children, a plentiful estate, health and strength to enjoy them, though all his merciful gifts, and designed to win you to himself, cannot, for any continuance, without God, make you really happy; nor on the other hand, if you have communion in his favour and love, can the want of all these things, sharp and painful as may be their loss, make you really miserable. God himself, in the light of his love, is the only satisfying portion of the immortal spirit, both in this life and in that which is to come.

How awful then is a state of alienation from Him; how fearful your guilt in departing from the living God! How shocking is hatred towards this God. And here is our real condition by nature, "walking in the vanity of our mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our hearts." And in this state the Gospel comes to men, and with overpowering light and love shews us God's tender and compassionate, most holy and yet most gracious feelings towards us, even while thus sinning against him.

## II. THE MIND OF GOD TOWARDS US.

His mind is that of infinite compassion and holy love. It is a father's heart towards an undutiful child, longing

for the return of the child to the parental home, and to filial obedience, that the child may be truly happy, which it never can be in a state of disobedience. You see this most clearly in plain statements such as these : "God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Let us consider the love of God to sinners, and the effects of that love.

1. THE LOVE OF GOD TO SINNERS :

Come here to discover the true source of all his dealings with the sons of men ; it is his own inexpressible, unfathomable love to them ; not selfish interested love like ours, but disinterested, free, bountiful, costly love, pure love ; love to sinners, love to rebels, love to those hating him. O how we wrong God's love, and measure it by our own scanty, poor scale, when we think that we must do something to merit his love before he can love us! Men tell their children, love God and he will love you ; neglect him and he will not love you : very partial is the truth contained in this statement, and very deceptive it may be, so as to become the spirit of Popery, and not of the gospel of Christ. God does love us though vile and sinful, and of this he has given the strongest of all possible proofs, the most palpable and irresistible evidence. "God has commended his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." I entreat you, my dear brethren, to realize this blessed truth. Say not, it is my repentance, my faith, my prayers, my alms, my goodness that will make God love me ; but say this :—' He does love me now, he has loved me from the very beginning, with that intense love which no tongue can utter, unquenched by all my sins, and hatred, and rebellion ; and to be measured only by the agonies and bloody sweat, and torturing death, of his only-begotten Son for my sins.'

But you object, this would be presumption and rash-

ness; this would be vain confidence; a saint of God like Peter, or Paul, or John, may justly use such language perhaps, but it does not become me, who am so weak and so sinful, to presume to think that God loves me. My brethren, let me reason with you; under this mock modesty and humility, you are really yielding to the wiles of the devil, and he is making you his prey, just as he made our first parents his prey; leading you to think that God is false, when he says he has commended his love to sinners; that God is deceiving you, and that the Devil speaks truth instead of being the father of lies. God has said he loves the sinful and the ungodly and his enemies; even so much has he loved them, that he spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all. I say then to you, drunkards, swearers, sabbath-breakers, fornicators, and men of every vice, see how bright the light of God's most holy love is towards you, in that Christ died for you; God will have you to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. O charge not the God of truth with falsehood, under the pretence of modesty and humility, but in reality, because you love your sins.*

Do you reply then, God does not mind my sinning? I may live as I please. If you have the heart to say so, I answer, you are again believing the lie which the Devil puts before you. See the cross of Christ: mark the drops of blood in the garden of Gethsemane; hear the groans of the Redeemer. Oh! our God hates sin with an intensity that can only there be discerned. His love is such a holy love as Christ's agonies only can set forth, and you believe

* How wonderfully, even in that awful judgment the deluge, was this love of God exhibited; for 120 years his servant Noah, that preacher of righteousness, warned men of the coming deluge, and the ungodly turned not from their ungodliness, till there was no remedy. But when righteous wrath had had its course, and Noah came out of the ark and offered sacrifices; in what a touching way is the mind of God brought before us; "The Lord smelled a sweet savour, and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake: for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, neither will I smite any more every living thing as I have done." As if the Lord would say, iniquity shall not triumph, I will overcome evil with good. I will bring good out of evil. A sacrifice is provided that shall remove the curse, and the time shall arrive when "there shall be no more curse."

not truly that love if you can still delight and wallow in sin. The love of God is revealed to save you from the power of that destruction of your happiness, the love of sin ; and if it effects not this, it is because you refuse to credit the plainest declarations and the highest and clearest evidence of divine love to your soul.

O my brethren, you may perhaps say, this love is incredible ? Most extraordinary it is ; most wonderful and glorious it is, and so it is ever spoken of in the word of God. Far, infinitely far, is it beyond all the narrow thoughts of man's heart : "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." And yet it is altogether true.

I beseech you, then, reject not all this love of God. There is reconciliation for the world ; there is forgiveness with God ; he is waiting to be gracious. Only put you away all enmity. Be reconciled to God. Receive his abundant grace ; yield yourselves to him, and walk evermore in the light of his love, and in the way of his commandments.

# SERMON XX.

## THE LOVE OF GOD.

2 THESSALONIANS III. 5.

*The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God.*

We proposed to consider, 1. The natural feelings of the heart towards God. 2. The mind of God towards us, and 3. The heart directed into his love.

In considering the natural feelings of the heart towards God, we pointed out, 1. Man's enmity against him, and 2. His consequent misery. In considering the mind of God towards sinners, we pointed out his love to them.

Let us now notice THE EFFECTS OF THIS LOVE.

They are truly marvellous, gracious, and joyful. In giving his Son Jesus Christ to sinners, his divine power has given them "all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him." Whatever a sinner needs, there is now in this day of grace that in Jesus which meets its necessity.

1. There is FREE FORGIVENESS OF ALL SINS. "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace." The very murderers of Christ were invited to repent and turn to God, under this assurance, "that your sins may be blotted out." The Apostles were commissioned to preach

this every where, and they every where testified of it. "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. He has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." There is not a human being to whom I may not go and proclaim these good tidings. Now God can receive you on coming to him, as if you had not sinned, and show you all a father's love. Sinners through Jesus may go to God as freely as his only-begotten Son does. Every barrier and obstacle is broken down, and we have "boldness," (wonderful word) "to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus."

2. Another effect is that THE HOLY SPIRIT IS PROVIDED FOR US. The Lord Jesus has received this gift for the rebellious, "that the Lord God might dwell among them." Having in our nature obeyed the law and suffered its penalty for us, it is a righteous thing in God to give him the fulness of the Spirit for us. In this gift is the largest and fullest provision for all our spiritual darkness, ignorance, weakness, and waywardness. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God."

3. A farther effect of this love is DELIGHTING IN GOD. In the gift and death of Jesus, applied to my heart by the Spirit, the devil's lie—that God is my enemy—is exposed in all its turpitude and malignity. My enemy, while he gave his Son to die for me ! O vile suggestion of the Father of lies. "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me." Thou art my only enemy. I see here the infinite reality and extent of God's love to me : that he, my Creator and my Judge, is my best friend, and loves me with a parent's love. I learn to delight in all his character, even in his holy hatred of sin. I learn to unite, "bless his holy name"—with "who forgiveth all thine iniquities." It is his command to us, "Rejoice in the Lord always," and he gives us all a sufficient ground to do so in the all-sufficient redemption of the Lord Jesus, who has redeemed

all mankind by his death. The moment I truly believe God's own testimony to his own truth, that moment I find joy. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We are "filled with joy and peace in believing."

4. Farther effects of this love follow. LIKENESS TO GOD is at length wrought in my heart, I copy that in which I delight; I see, that to be holy as God is holy, to be merciful as he is merciful, to be pure as he is pure, to be perfect as he is perfect, is my best privilege, my solid happiness. This begins indeed in repentance, that deep compunction, contrition, and godly sorrow which love only can produce; this is that change of mind which is wrought through looking at the pierced Saviour, enabling me to see the amazing and holy love of God to my soul; and so see sin my misery, holiness my happiness, the world my snare, and friendship with it to be enmity to God. Beholding in the face of Jesus the glory of the Lord, I learn to attain the same glory; the glory of hating sin and forgiving and loving sinners: the glory of patience and forbearance amid a world of sinners, with the purest righteousness; the glory in short of oneness in every thing with the mind of God: so that I may bask in the bosom of his love, and rejoice in the light of his countenance, and in all his holiness and love for ever. All this is laid up for every sinner in Jesus. He has fulness of grace for all men attaining this, which he is ready to give to all that ask and seek.

5. Once more, there is ETERNAL LIFE for sinners, as sinners, in the Lord Jesus. "We show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us; that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us. These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name. This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son: he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life." Jesus is the gift of God for you—for

all men ; receive this precious gift of God's love, and in him you receive all things. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." This eternal life begins in spirit now, in the knowledge of God, delight in him, and conformity to him ; but its visible glories are reserved for the return of our Lord, the resurrection of the saints, and their inheriting before all the world the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Then they shall see God face to face even as he is, be perfectly like him, and dwell in his presence, where is fulness of joy for evermore.

6. Yet farther still, God's love will not rest, till the righteousness of Jerusalem go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth, and the Gentiles see her righteousness, and all kings her glory : in short, till the WHOLE EARTH BE FILLED WITH HIS GLORY. "We, according to his promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." We look for a state of glory and blessedness, as the result of all God's dispensations, which shall fill our earth with holy happiness ; a glory in which the saints "shall reign for ever and ever." No tongue can tell, no eye can see, no heart fully conceive, this exceeding and eternal weight of glory, but it is plainly promised and revealed as a time when "God shall be all in all," the everlasting joy, and all-satisfying portion of his people.

Oh ! my brethren, I proclaim this love of God in Jesus, in all its extent, and a thousandth part is not told you, to all your souls. There is a real love of God to every human being. In the name of my divine Master I am commissioned with no short and limited commission ; but as his ambassador, I testify that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," not a few persons, but the world ! "not imputing their trespasses unto them." In this accepted time, in this day of salvation, we beseech you, "receive not this grace in vain." Call not God,—in the strong language of St. John, call not God a liar, by disbelieving

his record. Believe his love, and you shall have the witness in your own soul, by its filling you with holy light, heavenly joy, and pure love, and full happiness.

## III. THE HEART DIRECTED TO THIS LOVE.

Such as you have heard, my brethren, is the proclamation of gospel love to all men in the world. Our commission is, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." How is it received? Surely all are welcoming it with unutterable joy. Alas, it is not so! Let us consider men's rejecting this love,—God's deeper love still—the Holy Ghost directing to this,—Prayer for that gift.

1. MEN'S REJECTING THIS LOVE.

Every where ministers have to sigh over vast multitudes who totally neglect this great salvation. They have to ask, in deep anguish of spirit, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed." Even when the Lord of glory came to his chosen people Israel, "he came unto his own and his own received him not." The proofs of God's love in creation and providence, the evidence of his forbearance and loving-kindness to sinners, in the daily bounties which he bestows on all men, are such as to leave even the heathen who do not seek him, without excuse. (Rom. i. 18—20. Acts xiv. 15—17; xvii. 24—27.) But how much greater is the guilt, how much more abominable is the ingratitude and rebellion of those to whom he has sent the Gospel; to whom he has made known that he gave his only Son Christ Jesus to be a ransom for all? O how awful is that love of sin which makes men love darkness rather than light in its greatest clearness and fulness; so that though "God sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved," they wilfully reject this salvation, and give credit to Satan and not to God. This it is that makes the situation even of Sodom and Gomorrah better than that of those who refuse to hear the gospel. (Matt. x. 15.)

And shall God then lose all the fruit of his love in giving

his son to die ? No, there is yet a further depth of love that saves his elect. Let us consider,

2. GOD'S DEEPER LOVE STILL ; HIS ELECTING LOVE TO SOME TO BE A BLESSING TO OTHERS.

We see this in the choice of Abraham and his seed after them. "Behold the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also with all that is therein : only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day." We see the same thing in the election of real Christians. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love."

Be not high-minded ; imagine not that this is partiality. Again and again God most solemnly declares he is no respecter of persons. This grace of God given to his elect is for no selfish ends. Abraham was told, "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing :" Christians are told, "Ye are the light of the world, let your light shine. Ye are the salt of the earth ; lose not its savour." Every gift is given to a man to profit withal. Election of some is, that they may be a blessing to others ; for consider how God manifests this deeper love in election.

3. THE HOLY GHOST DIRECTING THE HEART TO THIS LOVE.

By the preaching of the gospel of his grace to sinners, and the power of his Spirit accompanying that gospel, to those whom in his sovereign grace and the riches of his love he purposes to save, he brings them to the knowledge of his loving-kindness in Christ, and draws them to himself. Here we have the sovereign grace of God giving to whom he will, and as he will. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." The special work of the Holy Spirit in sanctifi-

cation, is all of free and sovereign love. He "sanctifieth all the elect people of God."

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. xxxi. 3.) Thus the Spirit of God directs their hearts into the love of God. He sets that love before them, and effectually removes those prejudices which prevented their seeing it. The blessed Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shews them to us. (John xvi.) He "guides us into all truth:" even the full truth of God's holy love to sinners. Christ is the grand magnet by which a sinner's heart is directed into the love of God; "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

Thus "the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given to them." Their prejudices being removed by Divine grace, they know and believe the love that God has to them, and hence they delight in God as their Father; they love God who has first loved them. And feeling the power of this love, they dwell in love to all their fellow-creatures. O blessed direction of the human heart, by which that once selfish, evil, vile, and sinful heart is saved from the power and love of sin, and filled with most holy and universal love, and prepared and made meet for its heavenly home.

How, how can we gain such a direction of our hearts?

4. PRAYER, PRAYER, PRAYER.

Prayer is God's appointed means, and never fails, when simply and perseveringly pursued, to gain the blessing. The Apostle prays the Lord to direct our hearts into this love. Ample provision is made for our attaining it. No man can indeed by his own wisdom or strength thus direct his heart. No parent can give this changed heart to his children, nor any minister to his people. I have brought you now to the point in which my office ceases; I can do no more for your salvation than shew you the way; nor can you change your own heart; it is far beyond the power of fallen nature. Yet has God "laid help on one that is mighty:" and the poorest and most unlearned, the

vilest and most rebellious, may by seeking at the throne of grace, obtain the divine aid. Jesus has the Spirit for all who will come to him for it. Hear his own words ; "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink ; .... this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." To direct your erring feet into that heavenly pasture, the love of God, was one great end of his manifestation in the flesh : hence he suffered so much for you : hence your nature is exalted in him ; hence all blessings come through him. And now God waits that he may be gracious ; account his long-suffering salvation. O ask, and seek, and knock ; pray and wait, and you shall not be disappointed. "All, says Christ, that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me." It is wholly your own fault if you perish : it is simply from the wilful love of sin, and inexcusable preference of it ; and you will rejoice to testify it is all of sovereign grace to the unworthy, if your heart be truly directed into the love of God.

O my brethren, how inexpressibly weighty and important are these precious truths ! There is a way of salvation. The grace of God which bringeth salvation to all men has appeared. It is set before you by the command of the great God, to stir and move your hearts. He would have you to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. Every thing is waiting for your conversion. Angels are waiting to rejoice : ministers are preaching in hope of it, the day of grace is prolonged, that you may turn to God ; the goodness of God in every thing calls, yea leads you to repentance. "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die ?" Why will you reject all this love ? Why will you disbelieve God ; why will you gratify Satan ? Let God's patient love, God's lengthened forbearance, God's amazing grace, at length touch your heart and lead you to cry unto him for his Spirit, to direct your hearts into his love, and

give you the unspeakable happiness of knowing, loving, and delighting in God as your own God, and your portion for ever.

And when thus directed into God's love, the same love will be kindled in your own hearts. You will not only delight in God, but you will become like him. You will shew kindness to all as he does. You will have pure love like his. The Lord himself bestow this grace upon you all.

## SERMON XXI.

### WAITING FOR THE COMING OF CHRIST.

2 THESSALONIANS III. 5.

*The patient waiting for Christ.*

THERE is an intimate connection between the love of God and the delay of our Lord's return. We shall see this when we bear in mind that there are two days frequently mentioned in the Scripture, the day of grace and the day of judgment. It is owing to the loving-kindness of God that the present scene, which is the day of grace, is at all prolonged. This is made very clear in several plain statements. The reason of the delay of the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men is thus stated—"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. The long-suffering of our Lord is salvation. So Isaiah says, (xxx. 18.) "Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you."

The great danger we are in, is a serious mistake respecting this delay, as if God were unconcerned about sin. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." The delay of judgment is perversely construed, through our love of sin, into an indiffer-

ence to it on God's part, instead of being viewed as a day of grace in which we may escape the evil of sin and obtain everlasting salvation. How solemnly the Apostle warns us against this, "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance, and long-suffering? not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance, but after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds?"

This love of God is indeed now imperfectly seen, far less clearly than it will be in the day of Christ. Through our blindness, unbelief, self-love, and sinfulness, we are now very partial judges of God; but the day of revelation is coming; then it will be seen that there was a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and that "Christ gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." But faith apprehends and realizes and rejoices in this love, and is thus enabled patiently to wait for its complete manifestation.

This day of judgment is rapidly hastening on. Feel, I entreat you, that it is the love of God that now delays it. If above two thousand years since, Zephaniah could say, "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near and hasteth greatly;" how much more in these last days ought we to be prepared and ready, in the full assurance that "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." O be not hardened by the delay, but see God's love in it, and be brought to the very patience of Christ by it. I conceive it then to be peculiarly my duty, as a Christian watchman, to direct your attention to this all-important subject; a patient waiting for our Lord Christ; under these heads —

1. THE CERTAIN RETURN OF OUR LORD.

2. THE DANGER TO WHICH WE ARE EXPOSED IN HIS PROLONGED ABSENCE.

3. THE TRULY DESIRABLE STATE OF MIND.

4. THE MEANS OF ATTAINING IT.

## I. THE CERTAIN RETURN OF OUR LORD.

To manifest this was the leading object of the two Epistles to the Thessalonians. The first sets it forth distinctly as a ground of comfort in sorrow; and of warning against false security; and the second guards them against its imagined instant approach, and foretels the previous appearance of the Man of Sin, and his destruction with the brightness of the Lord's coming.

From these Epistles we may gather with the utmost certainty of assurance, that the Lord will personally and visibly come to destroy the Man of Sin: that Man of Sin which has been working so long in Popery, and is yet to be manifested in the full openness of his wickedness before he is finally destroyed.

Let us then consider some particulars respecting our Lord's return.

1. The Scripture MOST EXPLICITLY TESTIFIES OUR SAVIOUR'S COMING AGAIN. Before his death, our Lord frequently brought his coming again in visible glory, before his disciples. He said to them, "as the days of Noah were, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works." Many of the parables are given to convey instruction respecting this return. He instituted the Lord's Supper to be observed "till he come." In his last defence before the High Priest, he expressly avowed it; "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." When he ascended on high he sent two angels to assure the yet gazing disciples, "this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." This return is again and again brought before us in the Epistles, and is the chief burden or scope of the book of Revelation. The Scripture testimony is full and conclusive.

2. Equally full is THE TESTIMONY OF THE CREEDS. Every Creed contains this doctrine. The Apostles' Creed

says, 'He sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.' The Athanasian Creed asserts the same, adding, 'at whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account for their own works; and they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.' The Nicene Creed testifies, 'He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.' The ancient Creed of Irenæus in the second century, speaks of 'the bodily ascension into heaven of the beloved Lord Jesus Christ, and his coming again from heaven in the glory of his Father, to restore all things and to raise up all flesh of all mankind.' Tertullian, again, in the third century, gives another Creed containing the same truth. Thus the whole Church has ever testified, 'We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge.'

3. There is BUT ONE SUCH COMING * SINCE OUR LORD'S ASCENSION TO BE EXPECTED BY HIS CHURCH. The Apostle says, "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

* The title of our Lord is, ὁ ἐρχομενος, the coming one: and the verb ἐρχομαι is used for a progress towards, as well as an actual arrival. Every step in Providence and grace, having a relation to the final coming of the Lord, and being a progress towards it, may be called, in this view, a step in his coming to the world at large, and a partial manifestation in the particular instance. Under this interpretation, we explain the passages which limit a coming to particular persons and Churches. Our Lord told the Apostles, *I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you*, and he did give them eminently his Spirit to deliver the inspired volume of the New Testament, making clear his future appearance, and to work miracles in his name, manifesting his existing power and glory. Our Lord tells the churches of Ephesus, Pergamos, and Sardis, of his coming to them. In the way of particular judgment, those Churches have been visited, and the outward threatenings executed. These are steps and pledges leading the Church to see that the Lord is coming, and these steps have their final issue in his personal appearance. The view we should take of all his providential dealings with his Church, and in the world since he left us, is that of a gradual removal of all obstacles and hindrances to his appearing, and a continual progress towards a return; a steady advance on the way to his open manifestation of himself. In this view the Apostle says, *He that shall come* (ὁ ἐρχομενος the coming one,) *will come and will not tarry.* Whenever the coming is spoken of absolutely, without any limitation, there it may safely be taken to mean the final issue of his visible return. The substantives παρουσια and ἐπιφανεια have, it is believed, reference only to personal presence and manifestation in the actual arrival.

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment ; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." There are therefore but two appearings of our Lord ; one in humiliation and grace, the other in glory and judgment. The appearance in grace bringing salvation, has taken place : the appearance in glory of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ, is what Christians are now to be looking for. The *spiritual* presence of our Lord has ever been, and is now, with his Church : " Lo ! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." There is no need of this coming from heaven ; we only want faith, the gift of the Spirit. Faith realizes his divine glory, his all-sufficient grace, and his omnipresence, and enjoys this in its power and blessedness. The *visible* presence of Christ in our nature, his open and personal return to our earth, only takes place at the coming of the Lord Jesus, with all his saints, to judge the quick and the dead.

4. We have no warrant whatever in Scripture FOR EXPECTING A LONG CERTAIN PERIOD BEFORE IT. It is ever represented as at hand. " The Lord is at hand, the Judge standeth at the door, the end of all things is at hand ; the coming of the Lord draweth near." It is ever represented as coming suddenly and unexpectedly. " In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh. The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. As a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the earth." The Man of Sin was indeed first to be revealed ; the Babylon of Revelation was to be manifested, but the period of his continuance was purposely left in darkness ; the numbers were carefully hidden in mystical terms, of 42 months and 1260 days ; which being capable of a literal interpretation, never deprived the Church in each age of the power given in these statements of its nearness and suddenness. The Church of God has never had that previous knowledge of prophetical terms, that would keep it from the full advantage of these declara-

tions; the Holy Spirit speaks then with the largeness of the Divine mind, when it calls that "at the door and near at hand," which on looking back we can now see was at least 1800 years distant; but the expressions of uncertainty as to the exact time, and nearness as to the event itself, absolutely exclude any assurance of a FOREKNOWN CERTAIN PERIOD of considerable length like 1000 years, for then such expressions, and the consequent directions, could have no weight at all; the life of no human being having reached 1000 years, it would be impossible to be expecting a coming which must take place after that period, and therefore which could not take place to us; and the Holy Ghost never has given, or would give, impossible precepts. Thence we conclude that if the millennium be yet to come, we being required by God himself to be always ready and waiting, ought to be expecting our Lord before that period.

5. THE TIME OF BLESSEDNESS TO THE WHOLE CHURCH, IS AFTER THE COMING OF CHRIST. In the New Testament there is no period of rest promised before his coming again; till then the Church is represented as in an afflicted state, the world as abounding in wickedness; evil as growing to its height, and only put down at the coming of the Lord. The Church till then is an elect body, gathered out of an evil world; and the time of glory is not our death, but the return of our Lord. "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory. We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Then we "enter into the kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world." (Matt. xxv. 34. 2 Tim. iv. 1.) The Old Testament throughout confirms this view, that the time of glory for the Church is, the personal coming to our earth of the Lord of glory.

6. THE PRECISE PERIOD OF HIS RETURN IS HIDDEN FROM THE CHURCH. The exact season is concealed from all men. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but

the Father." The wise and holy and gracious reason is, to stir us up to watchfulness and prayer ; "Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is. . . . Lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping." This concealment, however, is only in part, for the Scriptures shew us the events which shall precede, attend, or follow his coming : the concealment too is only temporary. On his appearing, "every eye shall see him ;" and before his coming, increasing fulness of knowledge is promised to the faithful as time rolls on. (Dan. xii. 4—10.) And since "we are saved by hope,"—since the abounding in hope is through the power of the Holy Spirit,—since the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour is the blessed hope of the Church : it is at once both our duty and our privilege, to gain increasing knowledge of the signs and time of his coming. Hence the state of the children of God as to the knowledge of this period, is materially different from the state of the world. To the world Christ comes as a thief in the night, but it is not so to Christians. "Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day shall overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of the light, and the children of the day, we are not of the night or of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as do others."

7. LOOKING FOR THIS RETURN IS THE TRUE CHARACTER OF THE REAL CHRISTIAN : Not looking for death, but for our Lord's coming ; not fixing the thoughts on the state of the separate spirit and the immediate happiness of our own souls only ; but on the perfected reunion of body and soul, and the general glory of all the saints when our Lord shall again appear. Our Lord gives this positive command, (Luke xii. 36.) "Be ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord." St. Paul tells the Corinthians, "In every thing ye are enriched ; so that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of the Lord." He tells the Philippians, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be

fashioned like unto his glorious body." He tells the Thessalonians; "Ye turned from idols to serve the living and the true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." He tells Titus of the saving grace of God, teaching us to be "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." He tells the Hebrews: "unto him that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." How is it that the sacred writers pass by death as the object of hope even when they mention death, and carry us forward to view "the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge will give" in the day of Christ "to all them that love his appearing!" Read in this view the second epistle of Peter, who had been warned that he should shortly put off his tabernacle, but never farther glances at his death, but directs all the attention of his readers to the second coming of the Lord! My dear brethren, let your views be scriptural on this great article of faith. Let all your conduct have a reference to this. Educate your children for the day of Christ's appearing. Work at your daily employment to be accepted of him in that day. Gain and spend all your money with a simple reference to the account you must then render to Christ. Let the principle, "waiting for the Lord," enter into every thing: govern every plan, regulate all your concerns, animate all your hopes, guide all your conduct. If Christians, you are men waiting for your Lord, looking out for his return. Let your affections then be set on things above. Let your treasure be there. "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching."

II. THE DANGER TO WHICH WE ARE EXPOSED IN HIS PROLONGED ABSENCE.

That danger is implied in the prayer of our text, and it is in various passages expressly stated.

Let us notice the warnings of scripture, the nature of the danger, and the actual existence of the evil.

1. THE WARNINGS OF SCRIPTURE. In the time of Ezekiel, the Jews put off the idea of judgments coming as predicted, and are thus reproved ; "What is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying the days are prolonged and every vision faileth. I will make this proverb to cease,—say unto them, the days are at hand and the effect of every vision." In a similar manner our Lord has given the Christian church this warning." "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark ; and knew not until the flood came and took them all away ; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." He also gives this solemn admonition ; "If that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder." We are farther fore-warned that this state of mind in its full issue in the last days will proceed to questioning and actually denying his coming again in the flesh. St. Peter after in general charging us to be mindful of the words spoken by the prophets and apostles, puts an emphasis on the duty of being fully acquainted with this danger, "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming ; for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation—The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness ; but is long-suffering." St. John gives this as the mark of

the Antichrist: "Many deceivers are entered into the world who confess not that Jesus Christ is coming (ερχομενον) in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the Antichrist."

2. Notice next the NATURE OF THE DANGER.

It is putting off from us the thoughts of our Lord's coming.

This is a growing evil, commencing in an imagined delay of our Lord's advent, and then proceeding to question and deny it. The things of sight and sense have by nature chief influence over our minds. We see not this coming: it is a strange, extraordinary, and unparalleled event that the Lord should come in his glory with his holy angels; he said that he would come quickly, 1800 years since, and he has not yet appeared: all this is very staggering to our faith; unbelief then readily embraces the suggestion, May we not consider the day of our death as the coming of the Lord to us. This is a special danger in the present day; we know that it is appointed unto men once to die: this has been taking place daily and hourly in our world; only then let us put death in place of the coming of the Lord; and going to him instead of his coming to us. I answer, it is never safe to alter God's word: be not so deceived; death, though a state of rest, a conscious happiness, is, in reality, but a step onward to glory, and not our full glory: it brings a mere personal happiness, and not the enlarged happiness of all. It blinds your minds, when exclusively used, to the real hope of the Christian. The hope of Christ's coming in glory, and our being joint partakers of his glory, is most purifying, consoling, and joyful to the Christian who truly loves his Lord, and it alone explains his goodness in the present state of the world. Thus it greatly strengthens and increases faith and love. When this then is lost, and death only regarded, the soul suffers much loss, seeking in vain to find a substitute for the revealed hope of the church, in a mere selfish, a shadowy, unrevealed, hidden happiness. Instead of being animated by the prize of our high calling so clearly set before us, and rejoicing in the solid hope of the glory of God at the return of our Redeemer, it puts our best hope at a distance.

3. THE ACTUAL EXISTENCE OF THIS EVIL.

It has been very manifest in the professing Christian world. Our Lord's prediction in the Parable of the Ten Virgins has been fearfully realized both of the wise and foolish virgins. "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." Under the fancied bulwark of a thousand years before his coming, and under the certainty that their death would previously take place, the thoughts of men have all been directed for comfort, not where the scriptures direct them, to the coming of the Lord, and the full glory then to be enjoyed by all his people together, but to a mere release from suffering, and the happiness, often too selfishly desired, of the separate spirit. The great doctrine of the Second Advent of Christ, though the scriptures of the New Testament dwell on it almost exclusively as the great hope of the Church, and the quickening motive to every Christian grace and holy temper, has thus almost altogether lost its present use and power.

Search, dear brethren, what is the state of your own minds ; what have you been looking to ? is it the day of the Lord, or the day of your own decease ? is it the coming of Christ, or the coming of death ? Have you not practically been saying, "My Lord delayeth his coming ?" Surely our views have thus been really unscriptural, and the consequence has been a vast growth of worldliness. "Men heap treasures together in these last days," imagining that the world will continue much as it is for a hundred, if not a thousand of years : they make this world an idol ; they lay up its property for endless stores for themselves and their children. They know that death will not take it from their families, and having no object of excitement beyond, no fears nor hopes but as connected with death, a worldly spirit is fed by the fancied duty of making provision for a family and a lengthened futurity. But the coming of the Lord cuts up all this worldliness by the roots, and by the bright hope of the heavenly inheritance, raises us above all the carking cares of this transient world.

May the Lord then himself direct your hearts into the patient waiting for Christ.

# SERMON XXII.

## WAITING FOR THE COMING OF CHRIST.

2 THESSALONIANS III. 5.

*The patient waiting for Christ.*

HAVING already from these words directed your attention to the certain return of our Lord, and the danger to which we are exposed in his prolonged absence, we have yet to consider, the truly desirable state of the Christian's mind during our Lord's absence, and the means of attaining it.

### III. THE TRULY DESIRABLE STATE OF MIND.

The heart directed into the patient waiting for Christ.

It is remarkable that in the very Epistle in which they are told not to be soon shaken in mind, as if the day of Christ was at hand, they are stirred up to a patient waiting for him: they are still to be in an expectant state for it. In the margin it is the patience of Christ: the practical lesson is the same, with the fuller motive of that blessed Pattern before us. Let us, first, mark the Redeemer's patience, and secondly, Our Conformity to him.

1. MARK THE REDEEMER'S PATIENCE. Wonderful was that grace while he was upon earth. If you would "run with patience" the race that is set before you; look "unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the

joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame." Thirty years was he subject to his parents at Nazareth, patiently waiting to enter on his ministry. When tempted by Satan with a proffer of the immediate possession of all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, without conflict or difficulty, on worshipping him, patiently waiting his Father's will, he rejected the temptation with abhorrence. When the people would have crowned him as king, he departed into solitude. When Peter would have defended him by force of arms, he patiently rebuked him thus, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels ?" Remember his divine glory, his unsearchable wisdom, his almighty power, then see him beaten with stripes, mocked, spit upon, crowned with thorns, dressed in a pnrple robe, a malefactor preferred before him, carrying his cross, nailed to the tree and taunted there with bitter railings ; and how inconceivable the patience which endured it all ; as "a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."

Wonderful still is the same patience. Now he has ascended and is seated at the right hand of God. He has "all power in heaven and earth." Why delays he to judge the quick and dead at his appearing and kingdom ? Why delays he his coming and glory and universal dominion over the earth, so long promised him and so fully assured to him. O it is wholly from his patient love ! Touched he is to the quick with the sufferings of his people ; they "fill up that which is behind of his sufferings—in all their afflictions he is afflicted"—but the long-suffering of God waits (1 Peter iii. 20.) the Lord "is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." His mind is intently fixed on the fulness of time in which he shall return (Isaiah lxii. 1.) Again and again he gives messages, "Behold ! I come quickly," as if eager to enter on the promised recom-pence and joy ; but yet he waits, that the whole number of

his elect may be gathered, and the fulness of bliss and glory, promised to him in the completed body of his church, all be realized.

To this patience of Christ,—patient waiting for his coming, kingdom, and glory,—our hearts should be directed. All Christians share their Saviour's sufferings and character now, and are partakers of his Spirit, as they will share his glory and his kingdom hereafter. Hence St. John addressing his fellow-christians says, "I am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Christ."

2. OUR CONFORMITY TO HIM.

There is an impatient spirit in some of the followers of Christ, anticipating the immediate nearness of the day. Of this St. Paul warns us in the former chapter,—"We beseech you, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus and our gathering together to him, that ye be not soon shaken in your mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand," instantly coming. This spirit led some of the Thessalonians to "be disorderly, working not at all, and to become busy bodies." Similar dangers are ever connected with similar erroneous notions of divine truth. The spirit of patience in this view is opposed to restlessness, forwardness, and neglect of duties of life; to a confident foretelling of times and seasons as if we had full insight into them; instead of that spirit of inquiry, and searching diligently which marked the prophets, "searching (not presumptuously deciding) what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify."

To this patience, St. James especially calls all Christians, (James v. 6, 7.) "Be ye also patient, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." It is not, observe, a willing contentment with evil around us; it deeply mourns for sin in ourselves and in others: but it is a patient endurance of present suffering, in the assurance of the righteousness and love of our heavenly Father, and his coming

kingdom and glory, and a quiet resting on the wisdom and faithfulness of him, who, in the fulness of time, will accomplish all his gracious purposes. A sense of nearness we ought to have. "Let your moderation be known unto all men ; the Lord is at hand ;" he approaches. But he has not given to any to know the precise period, and thence we are called to a patient spirit.

This impatient spirit is however far from being the common or general evil of these days. I would now therefore point out rather the waiting spirit in opposition to indifference and unbelief, slumbering and sleeping.

The great root of patient waiting is real faith in the word of God. Faith firmly credits God's wisdom, truth, and love, in all the delay that has taken place, and realises his perfect faithfulness in all the promises which he has made. It is not a mere regard to his power, as being dependant on God, nor to his truth only, as infallibly certain ; but it is perfectly satisfied that his wise, holy, and faithful love is gradually, effectually, and steadily, accomplishing his declared purposes. What is this faith ? it is like the repose of a child on the breast of its mother ! the rest of the soul on the bosom of infinite wisdom, almighty power, and boundless love.

To this faith nothing is so desirable, so glorious, so blessed a hope as the coming again of the Lord Jesus. It is the gathering of all his saints together ; it is their full reward ; it is their sight of their Lord and their entrance into his joy ; it is their coronation, and the inheritance of the kingdom ; it is the exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Now the patience of the Christian, like that of his Redeemer, is willingly and joyfully suffering now : parting with many worldly advantages, enduring much reproach and privation ; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, having "respect to this recompense of reward." It is a patience quite distinct from rash anticipation without scripture warrant on the one

hand, and from the indifference of secret unbelief on the other.

Like every other grace, this of patient waiting has its beginning, its increase, and its maturity. Much does the Apostle speak in commendation of the working faith, laborious love, and patience of hope of the Thessalonians, and yet he prays for the direction of their hearts into the love of God and the patience of Christ; that is into higher degrees of them day by day, becoming more separated from the world, more heavenly-minded; having deeper and fuller views of God's love, and increasing confidence in the near coming of Christ; more assured hope of sharing his joy; and more cheerfully and invariably taking up the present cross in the prospect of the future crown.

Nor is this a matter of mere theory and intellect, or a matter of reason only, however proved by solid argument; while it is founded on the immoveable basis of God's ever enduring word, the *heart*, with all its warm, generous, tender and lively feelings, has here ample scope for its noblest and most joyful emotions: holy delight in God, joyful submission to him, entire confidence and repose in him; this is the heart directed "into the love of God and the patient waiting for Christ. But who is sufficient for these things?"

## IV. THE MEANS OF ATTAINING THIS.

Notice the power, and the attaining of it.

1. The power. "The Lord direct your heart." He who is a Spirit, who searcheth all things, "even the deep things of God," he only has grace and power and love to give this heavenly direction to our hearts. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, concur in our salvation. The Father revealing his love in the gift of his Son; the Son dying, rising, and returning; the special office of the Spirit, shedding abroad this love in our hearts, and leading us to abound in hope,—that is, in patient, joyful waiting. Amidst all the workings of corruption, and the sight of

wickedness without, and the sorrow of heart which these occasion, "ourselves also which have the first fruits of the Spirit, (there is the secret power raising us to this) even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies. For we are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

There is provided for you, my dear brethren, in Christ Jesus, your glorious Head, your risen Lord and Saviour, adequate power and strength to bring you to this happy life, and to prepare you for his full glory hereafter. There is the supply of the Spirit of Christ; there is for us sinners, fulness of grace in him, our Prophet, Priest, and King, he having received without measure the Spirit and all other gifts for us. Do not imagine there is one reason, but your own unbelief and love of sin, why you should not be brought to enjoy the love of God, to delight in him now, and patiently wait as his servant and in his work, for his return. His grace is all-sufficient for you.

Do you reply, I do no doubt this, but I doubt whether I may receive it; whether he will favour me with it?

Consider then,

2. THE ATTAINING OF IT.

And here I would lead you to notice faith in God's love, searching the Scriptures, marking the signs of the times, and earnest prayer.

1. FAITH IN GOD'S LOVE. The Apostle prays first of all, that their hearts may be directed into the love of God, and then to waiting. Before you can patiently wait, you must believe God's love to you, apart from any worthiness of love in yourself; his love to you as a sinner and a rebel: his love to you as "foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." That while this was man's odious and detestable character, "the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared: that God commendeth

his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

See then here the heart of God, unspeakably kind and gracious to you. See the arms of God open to receive you, however sinful. See by Jesus Christ a way provided by which you may at once return to the sin-hating and most holy Jehovah, and yourself gain the like hatred to sin, and conformity to God. He has testified his love to us in ten thousand forms, in creation and in providence, but most of all, in the redemption of all mankind, by our Lord Jesus Christ. Be not so base and insulting towards the God of holy love, be not so cruel to your own souls, as to charge the God of truth with falsehood, and give credit rather to Satan the father of lies. Know and believe the love that God has to you : feel the happiness of his love ; the distance at which you are now from him, and the happy hope of seeing him as he is. So will you be brought to the patient waiting for Christ.

SEARCH THE HOLY SCRIPTURES DILIGENTLY. There are the treasures of oil stored up by the Divine Spirit to replenish our vessels ; there we may gain oil for our lamps. It is impossible that you can be waiting for Christ unless you have solid scriptural reason to expect his coming. In the days of the Apostle, the Thessalonians had no need that any one should write to them of the times and seasons, for they knew perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. In the long interval of eighteen hundred years, we have greatly lost that perfect knowledge, and are dreaming of the world continuing as it is for hundreds or thousands of years. But God has not left his Church without that light which may dispel all these dreams. He has gradually been giving more and more insight into the predictions of his word as the time of the end draws nearer, that his Church may be maintained in that perfect knowledge of the day of the Lord's coming as a thief to the world. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light

that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts."

MARK THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES* Observe providence as well as prophecy. The events of the present day re-

* POLITICAL SIGNS.

1. Internal decay of Turkish power.—Rev. xvi. 12.
2. Evil principles, lawless and Infidel, active, but without visible head —Rev. xvi. 13.
3. Political peace amidst causes of agitation and trouble.—Rev. vii. 1; viii. 1.
4. Past overthrow of Christian profession in one of the ten Papal kingdoms.—Rev. xi. 13.
5. Wide-spread unbelief of Gentile nations.—Rom. xi. 25, 30—32.
6. Height of lawlessness, and decay of love.—Matt. xxiv. 12.
7. Prevailing contempt of Governments under shew of liberty.—2 Peter ii. 16, 10; Jude 11.
8. Ascription of power to the people.—Psalm lxxv. 2—7.
9. General breach of law, and of Christian covenant.—Isaiah xxiv. 5.
10. Infidel plans to overthrow sacred things.—Isaiah xxix. 15, 16.
11. Boastfulness in the spread of natural light. Isaiah l. 11.
12. The growth and maturity of a great Northern power.—Ezekiel xxxviii. 1—10.
13. Dissolution of states by the separating power of selfishness.—Dan. ii. 5; Micah v. 5—9; 2 Timothy iii. 1.
14. Wasting of Papacy, and weakening of its dominion.—Daniel vii. 24.
15. Sacrilegious alienation of sacred things, through luxury and profaneness.—Daniel v.; Malachi iii. 1.
16. Spread of anarchy, with pride of anarchists in number of proselytes. —Hab. i. 14.
17. Rapidity of intercourse and spread of knowledge.—Daniel xii. 4.
18. Political re-appearance of Roman power in the Eastern Empire. Daniel xi. 40.
19. Accumulation of wealth in last days.—James v. 3.
20. Contempt of promise of Christ's coming.—2 Peter iii. 8.

SIGNS RELATING TO THE JEWS.

1. Preparation of Holy Land for return of Jews.—Rev. xvi. 10. Isa. xxvii. 12.
2. Prevailing deadness of world to God's providence.—Rom. xi. 15.
3. Revived interest in the promises to the Jews among God's servants.— Psalm cii. 13.
4. Partial draining of Jews into the Holy Land.—Isa. vi. 13; xxvii. 12, 13.
5. Preaching of Messiah's approaching Advent to the Jews.—Isa lxii. 10, 11.
6. The Jews' own expectation of near deliverance.—Jer. viii. 15; Isa. xxvi. 18.
7. Renewal of visible covenant with the Jews.—Dan. ix. 27.

SIGNS IN THE CHURCH.

1. Warning of the Advent of Christ.—Rev. xvi. 16.
2. Character of teaching in the true church, blessedness after death.— Rev. xiv. 13.
3. Indifference to Jews' rejection in the visible church.—Rom. xi. 18—22.
4. Last form of sin—murmuring.—1 Cor. x. 10; Jude 16.
5. Selfishness and covetousness under form of godliness.—2 Tim. iii. 1.
6. Preaching of Gospel for a witness to all nations.—Matt. xxiv. 14.

markably correspond to those events which the Scriptures denote as preceding our Lord's coming. The predictions of those events, or characters of the times are exceedingly multiplied, nor is it necessary to dwell at length upon them. The varied revolutions that have taken plaee in the last half century ; the concern of Christians for the Jews ; the decay of the Turkish Empire ; the wasting of Popery ; the time of peace in the midst of many causes of trouble ; the spirit of infidelity and lawlessness ; of boasting, and murmuring, and the speaking evil of dignities ; the casting God out of every thing ; the contempt of authorities ; the extensive preaching of the Gospel through all nations ; the diffusion of knowledge of all kinds over the world at large —aud the scorn of the promise of our Lord's coming— these aud many other things that might be mentioned are conuected directly in the Scriptures with the coming of the Redeemer : and they are so manifestly and increasingly the character and the events of the times in which we live as to give great weight to that warning, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." They may well quicken our hopes of our Redeemer's speedy coming, and lead us to "watch and pray always, that we may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that

7. Standard of picty dim and low.—Matt. xxv. 4.
8. False hopes of world's easy conversion.—Isa. xvii. 10, 11 ; xxvi. 18 ; Zech. ix. 2.
9. Time of spiritual drought.—Zech. x. 1.
10. Long withholding of God's marked and conspicuous presence.—Isa. xiii. 13, 14.
11. Prevalent rejection of prophetic warnings.—Isaiah xxix. 11—13.
12. Increase in the numbers of the faithful.—Acts vii. 17 ; Dan. xii. 10 : Isa. xxvi. 15 ; ix. 8.

I cannot but add here a testimony how very closed the minds of the most devoted servants of Christ may be to the plainest statements of prophecy when contrary to their preconceived opinion. We have an unquestionable example of this in the following fact respecting the apostles. How plain our Lord's statement! *Behold we go up to Jerusulem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished ; for he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and spitefully entreated and spitted on : and they shall scourge him and put him to death, and the third day he shall rise again.* Could any thing be more literal and distinct in announcement of a coming event than this? Yet it is added, *they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.*

shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."* But your heart may remain after all this, dead, cold, and unbelieving: in conclusion then I entreat you—

Wait on God in EARNEST PRAYER. He "gives to all men liberally and upbraideth not." I can set before you God's love and the glory of the Redeemer; they are his appointed means for the soul's life; but it is very important for you to remember that man can do no more for you; the Lord, the Spirit, must put life into you; He only can do this; I point you to the gracious Redeemer as your only real Helper and Deliverer. As St. John the Baptist testified; "He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to bear, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:" so I point you to Jesus as having the Spirit for you. Inexpressibly gracious are his words: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." O go to Jesus in full confidence of his faithfulness and love. Wait on him and you shall not be disappointed. Seek him, and you shall find him.

O Holy Spirit of the living God, come, thou fountain of

* The progress of improvement in knowledge, morality and religion through our country and the world, has led some to suppose that we may anticipate either a gradual advance to perfection without trials, or at least a triumph by ordinary means over difficulties. And were there no corresponding progress in evil, and no clearly revealed word of prophecy, much might be reasonably thus anticipated. The rapid growth of various beneficial changes,—for instance, in our established church,—might thus lead us to anticipate its permanent security and triumph. It is delightful to be assured, in all events, that not one of these efforts of God's servants in his cause will fail of a present and final reward, nor be unavailable in promoting the fulness of glory yet to be revealed. But let us bear in mind that while the wickedness of men is filling up the measure of their sins, it is a part of the loving-kindness of God to give the brightest exhibitions of his grace to lead them to repentance; Noah preaches before the flood; Lot exhibits a pattern of piety in Sodom before its destruction; Josiah makes that eminent reformation in Judah just before the first captivity in Babylon: myriads of the Jews are converted to Christ before the second captivity. Let us not then be too secure in the notion, that because there is in our day a very great advance of religion, therefore, we are not near the great earthquake, (Rev. xvi. 18,) or the great day of tribulation. (Dan. xii. 1. Matt. xxiv. 21. Rev. vii. 14.) And yet on the other hand let us be quickened in all our efforts to do good, by the assurance of the great multitude to be gathered to Christ in that tribulation, (Rev. vii. 9.) and that none of our labours shall be in vain in the Lord. (1 Cor. xv. 58.) To the last let us hope and pray and labour for the welfare of our country and of the world.

life and blessedness, and now quicken those dead in trespasses and sins! O Divine Redeemer, give unto us, thy waiting people the water of life freely! O Heavenly Father, who wilt give good things unto them that ask: give now unto every one here present, that good gift, thy Holy Spirit, to abide with us for ever!

# PREPAREDNESS FOR THE DAY OF CHRIST

## URGED ON ALL CHRISTIANS.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF FOUR SERMONS.

## PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

These sermons were printed at the request of those who heard them; and the author the more willingly acceded to that request, from an anxious desire to assist in turning the attention of Christians in his beloved country to the all-important subject here brought before them.

The author cannot but press upon his readers the importance of attention to the prophetic word, and to the signs of the times. In order to acquire a competent knowledge of prophecy, next to the diligent study of the Bible, he would earnestly recommend the study of Bishop Newton and Sir Isaac Newton on the Prophecies, and Mede's Key to the Apocalypse,* and his Letters at the end of his folio volume: to which may be added, Woodhouse and Vitringa on the Apocalypse.

When the reader is well acquainted with these, later writers may be studied with more advantage, and to the knowledge of these, Brooks' Elements of Prophetical Interpretation will be a truly valuable help.

The reader who consults the authors above-mentioned, will be surprised to see that many things, which have been counted as novelties of the present day, were strenuously maintained by Mede two hundred years ago, and some of the most important, not as novelties even then, but as the sentiments of the early Christian Fathers, and of a large portion of the Christian Church.

* Mede's Key was written in Latin; but there is an old translation by R. More, published in 1643, and a modern translation published by Tims, in Ireland, and to be had of the London booksellers. Later events have, however, thrown more light on this book than in Mede's day could be attained.

The following prayer, with which Mede commences his great work, will show the spirit of piety and dependance on God with which he entered upon these studies. 'Thou who sittest upon the throne, and thou, O Lamb, root of David, who only wast worthy to take and open this book, open the eyes of thy servant, and direct his hand and mind, that in these thy mysteries he may discern and produce something which may tend to the glory of thy name and the advantage of the church.'

In a similar spirit he concludes his important view of the Synchronisms of Revelation. 'This last thing I entreat of thee, reader, who shall meet with these things, that if thou shalt perceive anything happily revealed unto me, (1 Cor. xiv. 3.) sitting by as a fellow-prophet, profitable either to thyself or others, touching these mysteries: that thou wilt wholly ascribe it to the mercy of God towards me: to whom also I will never cease to give thanks for that little ray of his wisdom. But if in anything I have committed an error, that count wholly mine, a man of small abilities, and no way (of which I am well conscious) fit of myself for these things. "Praise, honour, and glory to him, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever."'

In this spirit of humility, prayer and praise, may the author, and, all his readers, hear, read, and search the word of prophecy.

Prophetical truth, deeply but humbly studied, does not weaken our hold of any saving doctrine of revelation, but rather enlarges the mind to fuller and more extended views of Divine righteousness and goodness.

The author trusts also that he holds with greater simplicity and firmness than ever, those holy truths which it has been his endeavour to embody in his past writings for twenty years, of our fallen nature in Adam, our total ruin in ourselves, and the infinite love of God in the gift of his only Son, and in the promise of his Spirit. He desires to maintain with increasing stedfastness the recovery of God's people in and by Christ, their election in him before

the foundation of the world; their regeneration by his Spirit and through his word, their free justification through faith alone; their sanctification in the use of means of grace, such as hearing the word, prayer, and the sacraments; and the life of faith, hope, and love, thus nourished and maintained by the application of Divine truth in God's ordinances to the heart, through the Spirit. He rejoices in the thought that those thus given to Christ are upheld by Divine power to the end; shall have victory over Satan, death, hell, and the grave; a glorious resurrection, acceptance in the judgment to come, and a final and everlasting felicity at the coming again, and in the kingdom, of their Lord and Saviour. With these views are ever to be connected the unspeakable danger of neglecting the truth, of condemnation in the judgment, and of the certain and everlasting destruction of those "who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Respecting the period of the coming of our Lord, an event which every Christian does most assuredly in profession expect, the author has been led latterly to the conclusion, that this event does not follow, but precede the millennium. His judgment on this point rests partly on reasons stated in the third sermon of this volume, and partly on the plain statement of the destruction of Popery at the coming of Christ (2 Thess. ii. 8.); on the constantly repeated assertions of his sudden and unexpected coming, joined with directions to be looking, ready, and prepared for it, (directions which seem to lose their force if there be an intervening certain period of a thousand years): and on such prophecies as Daniel vii. 13, 14; Luke xxi. 24—28, &c.* He long rested in the idea of an exclusively spiritual advent; but the Saviour is always thus present with his church (Matt. xxviii. 20.) and for himself he dares no longer thus interpret the plain statements of the New

* For a fuller statement on this subject, the author refers his reader to his Practical Guide to the Prophecies.

Testament, or weaken what he deems the great hope of the church, that Christ will return in the same way in which he ascended. (Acts i. 11.) But after the mistakes of so many in ages past, and the differences of the most diligent modern students, and the positive declarations of our Lord, (Matt. xxiv. 36—44.) he equally dreads attempting to fix the exact time of that all-important event. Heartily does he love the many dear brethren who hold the view with which he himself was so long satisfied, and nothing but his own deliberate conviction of the truth of the sentiment here avowed, and of its vast importance at the present era of the church, would lead him to confess and make it known, and urge his fellow-Christians to a diligent study of the sacred record on this subject.

He, is, however, assured that it is one great and leading duty of the church to be ready for the Saviour's coming; and, thankful that the subject is more and more engaging the attention of Christians, he shall be grateful if these sermons be honoured of God to help to produce preparedness for that event.

When he considers the extravagances of some who have held this sentiment, he is not surprised that the church of Christ is sensitively alive to the danger of such extravagances; but he would suggest this consideration, whether the history of the church does not abundantly shew, that it has frequently been the cunning of Satan to discredit neglected truth, by endeavouring to combine error and extravagance with it. The author would only the more diligently press on himself and others the constant and prayerful study of the scriptures, and the bringing of every thing to that only infallible test, that we may know and follow simply the truth.

He desires also to guard all his readers against that common snare of the enemy, on the reception into the understanding of any portion of divine truth, that its admission, and still more its confession and defence, is a token of a saving interest in the gospel. There is perhaps especial danger of this snare where a truth is so important as that

which concerns the speedy coming of Christ, and where it is not generally received, but is rather offensive to the main body of the professing church. In such a case we are ready to conclude, that because we confess the truth, and suffer reproach for it, therefore we may be confident that the work of grace must be genuine in our souls. O let us take heed of resting in any form of godliness! The foolish virgins went out to meet the bridegroom, but were shut out from the marriage, wanting the oil in their vessels. Let no external profession whatever satisfy us. Let us wrestle in all the fervency of prayer, for the reality and power of godliness in our own souls. Let us wait only on God, with all perseverance to the end, in his appointed ways, that thus Christ may be formed in us, (Gal. iv. 19.) the hope of glory, (Col. i. 27.) and his spirit be really imparted to us, and dwell in us, and make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

For his own part, the author would request that he may not be charged with the sentiments of others which he has not personally avowed; and as he desires to be guided and governed by nothing but God's holy word, so he would thankfully receive the suggestions of his friends, and above all, entreats their prayers that he may ever be preserved from all error, and led into all truth.

EDWARD BICKERSTETH.

*Watton Rectory, Dec.* 24, 1833.

# SERMON I.

ROMANS XIII. 11, 12.

*Now is it high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*

DAYS, and months, and years are rolling away, and where are they conducting us? Every year, every month, every day is bringing us nearer to that vast, unfathomable eternity, on which we must soon enter. Nothing is more palpably clear, or more unspeakably important to us. May we ever be acting under a deep sense of this solemn consideration. May our minds be less and less attached to earth, and more and more set on things above, "where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." Let the general lethargy of the world around us only the more rouse us, lest we be also sleeping when our Lord shall come.

Feeling the importance of this view, I have taken a subject which I hope may quicken and call forth our efforts in behalf of every good work, and stir up our minds to new life and zeal in following our heavenly calling. May our God give us his divine presence and blessing.

I will consider,

I. THE STATE OF MEN IN GENERAL.

II. THE AWAKING OUT OF THAT STATE.

III. The work of the believer.
IV. The motives to attend to it.

## I. THE STATE OF MEN IN GENERAL.

Men are in "a state of sleep" as to the things of the soul. Let us notice the frequency of this description and the justness of it.

1. The frequency of this description.

It is repeated in the Bible in various forms, and addressed to all classes of men. In the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. xxv.) you will observe, that both the wise and the foolish virgins are described as "slumbering" and "sleeping," when the bridegroom cometh. In the parable of the Tares, we are told, "while men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat." (Matt. xiii. 35.) Our Lord exhorts his disciples to watchfulness by this consideration, "Lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping." (Mark xiii. 36.) St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians, "awake to righteousness and sin not: for some have not the knowledge of God." (1 Cor. xv. 34.) And to the Ephesians he gives this quickening call, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Eph. v. 14.) Again, he exhorts the Thessalonians, "Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night, but let us who are of the day be sober." (1 Thess. v. 6—8.

You see how frequently this description of a state of sleep is set before us, and how much we are warned against it. You observe how it applies to God's children as well as to others. The address in our text I conceive to be especially made to believers, but the description is true of all men, and applied in the word of God to all men.

This very frequency of description has a voice. It tells us how thoughtless we are of our true state, and how needful it is to be roused out of it, and to watch against it. May this be one blessed result of our consideration of the subject this day!

We proceed to notice,

2. THE JUSTNESS OF THIS DESCRIPTION.

It is a most just account of the UNCONVERTED.

Let men think for a moment what their real condition here is. What is our life ? a span of time between two eternities. Whither is life leading us ? Can you imagine that the body laid in the grave is the end of man ? Can you think all terminates there ? Such vain imaginations of a wicked heart need no refutation. Life is leading you to a fixed, an eternally fixed, state. Life issues either in glory everlasting and beyond conception blessed, or in woe eternal and uuutterable : and every man living will speedily be fixed in one or the other. Now what are unconverted men doing in this short fleeting span of life ? They are living as if this world were the whole of their existence ; as if they had no immortal and accountable souls : utterly regardless of all those momeutous realities of eternity, into which any hour may plunge them, and a rapidly approaching moment will certainly conduct them.

Are not men asleep ? What is a state of sleep, but one of ignorance concerning all that is surrounding us ? Suppose a case. A man lies down to rest ; he leaves all quiet in his house ; he falls into refreshing slumbers ; and while he sleeps, robbers enter his dwelling : he minds it not ; they plunder his most valuable property ; he thinks nothing of it. Perhaps he is in the midst of some splendid dream ; he imagines that he has secured permanent advantages, that he has gained large accessions of wealth, which will make him easy for the remainder of his days : or he is enjoying some exquisite pleasure of his life, aud his sleep is very sweet aud pleasant to his soul ; but the robbers carry off his property, and the owner still sleeping in his imagined happiness, they set fire to his house. He yet perceives not his danger, till the flames spreading upward, he sinks in the gencral destruction, and awakens in the midst of that fire that consumes and destroys him.

O unconverted sinner, this is thy case ; here is the

picture of the soul asleep in sin. The great plunderer Satan is in your dwelling, and robbing you of your best treasures. The very fire of disease and death is lighted to consume you, and yet you are asleep.

Sinners pursue in this sleep their varied dreams, and what vain dreams are the plans of worldly men! Some think the possession of riches the most desirable and important object to be pursued, and under this dream all their faculties are stretched to the acquisition of this world's gain. But if they awake not out of their sleep, till they wake in eternity, what particle of their riches will be left them, but the rust to witness against them? Others dream that pleasures make them happy, and are really good; pleasures of intellect, pleasures of society, pleasures of feasting, and other pleasures of this world; they too must wake out of this dream, and O what a terrible awaking it will be, if they wake not before it be too late! "Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton: ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter. Weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you." There are again others, who have dreams of ambition, thinking that the honour and glory of man is to be preferred to every thing else, and man's displeasure to be above all things dreaded; they shall wake out of this dream, and find the breath of human censure and applause wholly vain and worthless.

But while such dreams are filling their minds, the awful realities of life are wholly unheeded. They are fast asleep as to all concern respecting things of infinite magnitude. The reality that the great God is ever with them, witnessing all they do, ever about their path and about their bed, "spying out all their ways"—they see not this, they feel not this. The reality that each word and work is the seed of an eternal condition, and will testify hereafter for or against them—they see not this, they feel not this. The reality that "life is a vapour that appeareth for a little time, a post that hasteth along—a shadow that rapidly flieth away"—they see not this, they feel not this. The

reality that God's word is altogether true, and governs and regulates all things in this world, and that it is the true light aud lamp to guide the wandering feet of men,—they see not this, they feel not this. The reality that man is a fallen spirit, that his condition is most awfully dangerous, and that he is in himself lost and ruined, that God has given his only-begotten Son, the Lord Christ, to be our only Saviour, and that the Father and the Son have given the Holy Spirit, the only Regenerator, Sanctifier, Comforter, and Helper of man,—they see not this, they feel not this. The reality that they must soon die, that judgment is at the door, and in a little space, if they repent not towards God, and believe not in the Lord Jesus Christ, they will for ever be shut up in the prison of hell, with accursed devils, in wailing and anguish that will never abate ; O ! they see not, they feel not this awfully tremendous reality. Great as these things are, intensely interesting to them as they are, they call these 'dreams and follies.' Surely the sleep of death is here. They call this earthly thing great, and that worldly conduct noble, and this discovery wonderful, and that attainment excellent ; but these greatest and most wonderful realities, they allow to pass by unheeded and disregarded. O, my brethren, let there be to us but one test of what is really great and noble, wonderful and excellent. Let us place all in the bright light of the great day of judgment ; then will be seen the inexpressible insignificance of what the world calls great and wonderful.

Surely none fast locked in the deepest sleep, are more unconcerned about any thing that passes around them, than unconverted men are about all that it infinitely concerns an immortal being to attend to. What do they mind ? How difficult it is to rouse them ! God sends most awakening calls in his Providence. One after another is year by year taken from their very side ; it may make a momentary movement, but they soon sink into the same slumber : they experience varied trials, afflictions, losses, and disappointments ; they are for a little time disturbed and made uneasy ; but still they settle themselves down to

the same heedlessness. God sends faithful preachers. They hear the most impressive discourses again and again, but nothing rouses them.

If any providence would have awakened unconverted sinners through our land, surely the visitation of the Cholera Morbus should have done it. For a time it did seem to affect and rouse even careless sinners. But much as this had been blessed to God's children, He has looked in vain for any general turning to him. It was with us, as with the Jews of old, "I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, what have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord." The state of our country at large, apart from the spiritual church, is similar to that which our Lord describes as the state of things before the deluge and the destruction of Sodom, and as the state the world shall be in before his coming. "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot,—they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded, but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all,—even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." The fault of those who were then living, was, that their whole soul was in earthly things; they were entirely engrossed in their various schemes and plans concerning this world. Their feasting, and their marriages; their business and their settlements filled their minds, so that they had no time, as they imagined, to think of other things, till every scheme and plan was swallowed up in the general destruction.

O unconverted men, such is your case, even yours, at

this moment. Destruction hangs over you. Awake, awake ! I am not your enemy in disturbing and rousing you. It is the part of a best friend. Bestir yourselves ere it be too late, and pour out for yourselves the prayer, "Lighten mine eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death."

THE CONVERTED are also in a measure asleep.

True it is that their eyes have been opened, so that they are in some degree made sensible of the vanity of this world, as the true rest and portion of man. They are in some measure awakened to perceive that the greatest evil in this world is sin, which brings down God's displeasure, and the most valuable good to be attained here below is Christ, and his free and great salvation. The world calls them wild and enthusiastic on these subjects, and thinks them extravagantly eager after them, but what a perversion of understanding is here ! Of all the wild enthusiasms that this world witnesses, in the eye of God, our Creator, the most foolish, and weak, and ruinous, is the enthusiasm of worldly-mindedness. To neglect for the baubles of time, the solid glories of eternity ; to disregard for the favour of the mere creature, whose breath is in his nostrils, the favour and approbation of him on whom we depend for life and breath and all things—for the sake of standing well with a fellow-worm of the earth, to forfeit the dignity of walking with God, and the bliss of sweet communion with him. Oh ! of all extravagances, that of the love of this world, counted prudence and wisdom by the dreams of men asleep, is the most wasteful and ruinous ; of all bankruptcies, the bankruptcy of soul and body in eternity is the most fatal and irretrievable. The man of this world's wisdom parts with his inheritance for a straw ; barters eternity for a moment ; and receives a beginning hell here in the cares, and disappointments, and emptiness of his gains ; and a never-ending hell hereafter in the wrath of God through eternity.

The Christian sees something of this, and feels something of it, but not with that distinctness, life, and power, that he should. While the world is calling him an enthusiast, and

saying again and again, 'you go too far' you think too much of religion: you are quite mad upon that subject;' he truly feels and mourns under his coldness, and, compares with their everlasting moment, his sad and much-to-be-lamented indifference and unconcern to spiritual and eternal realities. He feels that he is still weighed down by the sleep of worldliness, and the dreams of earthly things. He is feeling and exclaiming with all the impression of fresh light, 'I am but half awake.' O for more life, more zeal, more love to God, more devotedness to Christ! Yes, my brethren, I speak the mind of many a Christian when I say our dulness in the things of God is our continual burden; we groan under our spiritual insensibility. The confession and the prayer of the believer is—"my soul cleaveth to the dust, quicken thou me according to thy word." O that I could constantly rise above that vain world to which my affections are so often sinking! O that I could constantly realize the presence and the love of my blessed Lord and Saviour! O that I could always perceive clearly and fully the unsearchable riches of his grace, and the completeness of my soul in him! O that I could live in the enjoyment of the sweet truth of his electing love, his freely justifying grace, and my adoption into his family! O for a constant and realizing view of his speedy coming, and the rich hope of abiding with him in glory, in that "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!" I find a spiritual drowsiness ever and anon creeping upon me: I resist it; but still it prevails again and again, and of those things which I feel to be the things of supreme and eternal magnitude, I am often losing sight.

Be comforted, O believer, your time of darkness will not last long. Soon the light of glory will come. Soon the sun of righteousness will shine in full splendour upon your soul. Soon what "is sown in weakness" shall be "raised in power:" and what is sown "a natural body" will be "raised a spiritual body;" and as "you have borne the

image of the earthy, you shall bear the image of the heavenly."

But in the mean time awake from the lethargy which the very air of this world occasions, and arise, and "let your light shine before men."

## II. THE AWAKING OUT OF THIS STATE.

"It is high time to awake out of sleep."

The conversion and revival of the soul are like the awaking of the body out of sleep, introducing us to new life, new energies, and new labours.

We will consider the means of this awaking, and the awaking itself.

### 1. The means of this awaking.

The ordinary outward means is the ministry of the word. The word of God is the appointed voice to quicken the dead sinner, and to rouse the slumbering saint. "The hour is come and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." (John v. 25.) "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. x. 17.) "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." (James i. 18. See also 1 Peter i. 23—25.) Hence it is the acknowledgement of God's servants—"Thy word hath quickened me." (Psalm cxix. 50.) "I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me." (Psalm cxix. 93.)

No wisdom of man can awaken a dead soul. O the emptiness of that poor philosophy of this world, which infidel men would substitute for the truths of the gospel ! God has shewn, and will shew more and more, the power and glories of his own truth, in the vanity and insufficiency of all human substitutes. They are all as chaff compared with wheat—empty, vain, insufficient, and unsatisfying. But see through the history of the church, whether recorded in the New Testament, or in its subsequent course, how powerful the faithful ministry of the word really is. (See Acts throughout.)

My brethren—would you be lively Christians ; Be very

diligent in frequenting all the appointed means of grace. You want a continual contact with the truths of God's word, to keep you from spiritual slumber and lethargy.

But man requires more than the outward means; they are only valuable as the channels by which the current of the water of life flows to us. Man is not merely in a natural slumber—his is a spiritual slumber; or, to use other figures, his heart is hard and stony, insensible and unimpressible: and though the word is a well adapted weapon, yet the hand of Jehovah himself is required to make it effectual, so to break in pieces what is hard, so to change and soften the heart of stone, that it may become a heart of flesh. Our natural state is a state of spiritual death, and it requires the power of Omnipotence to give us spiritual life.

My brethren, the Spirit of God alone quickens both the dead soul and the sleeping saint. It is his concurrence with the preached word, that makes that preached word vivifying and operative. If you would be roused, look much for that Holy Spirit. He is life and fire—warmth and love. Are you sufficiently alive to this all-important truth? You attend the means of grace; but do you attend in the spirit of prayer! You listen to the gospel: but are you lifting up your heart all the while, 'God bless this sermon to my soul, send this truth to my heart, quicken my dull affections?' You speak of the sermons in your families; but do you speak to God of them in your devotions; again and again intreating his grace to make his word quick and powerful to your salvation?

2. THE AWAKING ITSELF.

We will notice the opening of the eyes, the rousing of the affections, the going forth of the desires, and the exertion of the strength.

There is, 1. THE OPENING OF THE EYES.

When our Lord commissioned the apostle to the Gentiles, he sent him forth with these words—"I send thee to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive for-

giveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in me." The opening of the eyes is the first thing in spiritual awaking. When men are really awakened from the sleep of sin, a new world bursts upon them. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:" he is born again by the Spirit of God to new life. He asks, 'What am I?' an immortal being, fallen from a state of holiness, sinful, and alienated from my great Creator. He asks, 'Where am I?' on the brink of eternity—but a step between me and the immediate presence of my justly-offended Creator. He asks again, 'What have I been doing?' and his conscience replies, rebelling against an almighty, wise, holy, and most gracious Father! and my life a course of the basest folly and ingratitude? O that I could be so blinded by sin and Satan! What an awful danger have I been in! On the brink of an eternity of misery, into which a single moment might have plunged me, and I knew it not. What a tremendous ruin! the creature ever to be under the justly-merited wrath of the Creator! O how shall I escape?

Thus the eyes are opened to see the infinitely momentous realities of God's word. And he who sends his Spirit thus to "convince of sin," sends the same Spirit also to "convince of righteousness." The eyes are farther opened to see and receive that precious truth "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life:" O how sweet is this light to the eyes! how cheering the beams of the sun of righteousness! then we say, is there such a Saviour, so great salvation, and all this for the lost! Did Jesus come into the world to save sinners, and will he receive me? O blessed truth, "Whosoever cometh to him, he will in no wise cast out."

And when thus drawn to Christ, the eyes are opened to see farther treasures of his grace, as "in him we are blessed with all spiritual blessings, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world," justified freely, not only without merit, but while without works and while ungodly,

adopted into the Divine family, and made the scholars of the Holy Ghost, "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, and kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." O then with what joy, may the soul exclaim, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. THE ROUSING OF THE AFFECTIONS.

There is not only light in the understanding but warmth in the heart. When the eyes are opened, then the affections also are excited. FEAR is with many the first feeling. Oh the terrors of the Divine wrath, to perish for ever, to lie under the Divine displeasure, and his awful curse! Who can endure this? "What must I do to be saved?" now becomes the first question, and to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," our grand concern. The cares are turned now in this direction, Am I a Christian? If I knew that I were a child of God, then I should be contented. But HOPE is joined with fear; he invites all to come: he is the Saviour of the lost, "he came into the world to save sinners;" I will trust, and not be afraid. I will venture all on him; he never rejected one poor sinner that came to him: I then, will hope in his mercy. With this LOVE is excited and enkindled: how can I but love my God? He spared not his own Son, he gave him for such a sinner as I have been, how can I but love my Saviour? He thought of me in my enmity and rebellion, with pity and love, and took that wonderful way of becoming man to live and die for me: he still thinks of me in heaven, and is there my living head and friend. May love to Jesus be my ruling passion; for none can shew such cause of love to another, as the Christian can shew for his love to Christ. And with this comes JOY, "joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Truly, a pleasant thing it is to the eyes to behold the sun." But far more pleasant and joyful to behold the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. What a grand mistake to suppose that religion is a dull, outward, melancholy, formal thing. None that have truly entered into it, will say this! It is

all life, sympathy, animation, and feeling; it touches every string of the heart, and fills us with joy and peace in believing."

3. THE GOING FORTH OF THE DESIRES.

When we awake out of sleep, our wants begin, and our desires are stirred up for the supply of them. Few things mark spiritual life more distinctly than the earnest desire of the heart after spiritual blessings. When a Christian awakes to life, then the breath of prayer proves that life.

We may say of every worldly man, he knows not real communion with God in daily prayer. We may say of every Christian, *he prayeth*. This is indeed the spiritual barometer of the soul. Whatever outward storms, whatever clouds and darkness may surround him, if the barometer of prayer be steadily rising, his soul is on the way to brighter, and fairer, and happier days. My brethren, What are your prayers? What can your closets testify as to retired, fervent, continued pouring out of your souls before God? Do you make all your requests known unto him? This is the evidence that your souls live.

4. THE EXERTION OF THE STRENGTH.

When a man wakes up with returning light and life, he rises and goes forward, entering on his labours, and pursues them through the day. The Christian, too, has a great work. He "labours not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat that endureth to eternal life, which the Son of man giveth." And O what exertion is here requisite! Look at the racer how he strains every nerve; look at the wrestler, how all his muscular strength is required: look at the warrior—does he sleep in all the energies of the conflict? We run, we wrestle, we fight for life and salvation, we contend not for "a corruptible, but for an incorruptible crown." Every thing is at stake; we have mighty enemies; we are very weak; and all would be lost, had we not an Almighty helper. It is his grace alone that raises us from our falls, preserves us from being completely overthrown, and upholds us still, and enables us to go on "faint, yet pursuing." My brethren,

if you never felt that religion called for all our efforts, that it was a work wrought in us by the mighty power of God, and manifesting itself in all good works to man, you know not yet the true character of the religion of the gospel.

We live in a world, the very air of which is, as to spiritual things, full of heaviness and drowsiness. Seldom do men get stirred and animated, and roused by those around them. We generally live in the chilling, freezing, benumbing and deadening atmosphere of this world, and too often ourselves catch the spirit of slumber. But let us remember, we must "press into the kingdom." "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

## SERMON II.

ROMANS XIII. 11, 12.

*Now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand, let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*

We have considered from these words: 1. THE STATE OF MEN IN GENERAL as a state of sleep: pointing out the frequency of the description, and the justness of it, as applying both to unconverted and converted men. We have also considered, 2. THE AWAKING OUT OF THIS STATE, pointing out the means of awaking; the word of God made effective by the Spirit, and the awaking itself, in the opening of the eyes, the rousing of the affections, the going forth of the desires, and the exertion of the strength.

We have yet to consider,

3. THE WORK OF THE BELIEVER.

4. THE MOTIVE TO ATTEND TO IT.

### III. THE WORK OF THE BELIEVER.

"Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." The expression seems to be taken from a sudden alarm given to soldiers sleeping in the camp. They are roused by a cry of the immediate ap-

proach of danger; they are told to throw off all that would impede their safety and their warfare, and put on all their glorious armour. The truth conveyed to us is, that when awakened, the work of the Christian is to lay aside every sin, and to walk in newness and holiness of life, in the faith, hope, and love of the gospel.

We will notice,

1. WHAT IS TO BE CAST OFF.

"The works of darkness" must be "cast off." Some particulars of these works of darkness are enumerated in the following verse; "Gluttony and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, strife, and envyings, making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof;" here are some of the works of darkness.

The Bible is indeed full of that great change, which true conversion produces in the "casting off all such works."

Thus St. Paul tells Titus, "We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward men appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Sin, then, and all the tendencies to sin, are "the works of darkness;" whatever "makes provision for the flesh to fulfil its lusts," all unbelief of God's word, worldliness of spirit, self-seeking, self-indulgence, love of ease; in short, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." Well may these be called "works of darkness." Not entirely because wicked men hide them: they are too prominent and manifest on the face of society: they walk abroad in every street, and enter every dwelling. But because they spring from a blinded mind, a soul asleep in sin: "He that doeth them hateth the light." They are suggested and fostered by Satan, the prince of darkness, and they lead to everlasting darkness,

that "outer darkness, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

Well, then, may the apostle exhort us to "cast them off;" the very expression shews the eagerness and resolution, the earnestness, and firmness, and abhorrence with which the Christian is to reject and repel every temptation to those sins, and to "cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit," I say—the Christian—for till we have been awakened out of the sleep of sin, and born again of the Spirit of God, "we love darkness rather than light," and have no disposition to "cast off its works." But when "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ has shined into our hearts," then the Spirit of Christ enables us to "cast off these evil works." It is then our daily employment through him to put off sin. It is not "we have cast off," but "let us do it." The enemy seeks more and more to wrap round us, and entangle us in his filthy garments, and we have a traitorous heart on his side to assist him; and how can we get rid of the loathsome apparel? See how the apostle groans under it: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He then tells us who is the mighty deliverer—"Jesus Christ our Lord." So runs the gracious promise: "He will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." (Micah vii. 19.) The promise of the new covenant is express: "sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Rom. vi. 14.) The apostle, in this chapter, illustrates this mighty change, and the means by which it is effected.

Do you then long to be free from your sins? Do you find them entangling your steps? Are you ashamed of these polluted and defiled garments? Jesus is your only deliverer. Look to him continually. There is not one sin but you may subdue it in his strength. There is not one sin you will not, when tempted, yield to without him. Try this plan, day by day; live in prayer to Jesus, for

grace to cast off your sins, and you will find a power over them beyond your hopes.

We have also to notice,

2. WHAT IS TO BE PUT ON—"the armour of light."

It is only a half-way religion to bend our strength against sins. We shall also, if under the power of Divine grace, desire and labour to be "filled with all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God." (Phil. i. 11.)

What then is "the armour of light" we are to "put on?" The apostle speaks thus of it in a following verse, "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." He is all in all in this armour; he is both the proper ornament and the complete defence of the Christian. We put on Christ as the Lord our Righteousness, and so are made the righteousness of God in him, and thus in him are accepted before God. Thus only can we appear before God, perfect, beautiful, and glorious. We put on Christ also as we are made like him, and these two ever go together. "Every one that hath his hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." He became like us, that we might become like him. God first put on man, that man might put on God. Thus putting on Christ, we put on all grace. And this not only by studying him as our example, but by a real participation of his Spirit, in such wise as that daily the likeness is growiug, while we are led by that Spirit to study his example, and enabled in some measure to conform to it; so that these two advance together; growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Here—Christians, you see your daily lessons and labours, still striving to become more like your Saviour, more meek, forbearing, heavenly, and devout every day.

And while Christ is all in all in this armour, every part of it has a direct reference to him and his grace.

We have a full account of the Christian armour, Ephes. vi. 13—18. "Take unto you the whole armour of God,

* See Leighton on the text.

that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked ; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God ; praying always with all prayer and supplication, in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

The apostle give us an abridged account of this armour, in directions and cautions similar to those in our text. "Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober. Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation."

You will observe here, the three leading parts of the Christian life, "faith, hope, and love," as the chief points of the armour of light.

Faith is a "breast-plate and a shield." It wards off, and protects us from the varied weapons and assults of our spiritual adversary. This faith is a hearty belief of all that God has spoken in his word. It is assured that God has spoken, and that what he has said will be executed. It views his threatenings against all sins, and thus sees sin to be the greatest evil, and flies from it, as bringing down the wrath to come. It reads his precepts, as the directions of infinite wisdom and love, and seeks to follow them in all things. It hears his warnings, and "moved with fear," hastens to the appointed refuge. It listens to his promises, and is "fully persuaded that what he has promised he is able also to perform." And as the scriptures are full of Christ, and he is the sum of all, faith especially regards him, clings to him as our "righteousness and strength," and daily receives out of his *fulness* all grace and help.

Hope comes next as the fruit of faith. Faith is a re-

ception, by the renewed mind, of the whole revelation of God to man; but hope is fixed on his promises of future good, and firmly expects, and patiently waits for their performance. How is it that many discountenance "the hope of salvation," as presumptuous! They know it not as the Christian's helmet, that which enables him to lift up his head with confidence in the day of battle. Through the power of the Holy Ghost you may abound in this grace. Gain, therefore, a blessed assurance of hope, that, your sins being pardoned, and God, your reconciled Father loving you, as one of his own family, all things are yours for time and for eternity. This hope is full of activity, and the spring of zeal and exertion. It abounds in works and labours of love, and "we desire" says the apostle, "that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." This hope is full of *immortality*, and will lead you to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." As your hope is bright, you will be happy.

And then "LOVE" flows from "faith and hope," the greatest, as it is most enduring, and most conforms the soul to God. You will never gain love, but in the way of "faith and hope." "Faith worketh by love; the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. As God is love," so is the Christian to be *love:* filled with love to the triune Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: filled with love to all his brethren in Christ, and overflowing with love to all his fellow-creatures. Inflamed by this love, the rich will count it the highest use and privilege of their riches to assist and relieve the distressed. What a curse is property, if not so used; and what a blessing, if thus constantly laid out as a talent for God. Inflamed by this love, the poor, valuing spiritual blessings above all things, will be well contented, and abundantly thankful in their appointed lot. "For hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to them

that love him ?" This love manifests itself in the exercise of Christian patience, gentleness, kindness, consideration, forbearance, long-suffering, firmness, and holy courage for Christ. It again manifests itself in the faithful discharge of our immediate relative duties in business, in the family and in the social circle.

Well may this be called the "armour of God," as it is the daily supply of his Spirit that enables us to attain or wear any part of it. All is his gift—he "works all our works in us." Effectually too does this armour *defend* the soul against the attacks of every adversary. Faith lays hold of Christ's righteousness, and so answers every charge of guilt. *Faith* receives the supply of the Spirit, and so attains meetness for heaven. *Hope* cheers the soul amid all the trials and temptations of the adversary: and *Love* becomes the delightful evidence that the Holy Ghost dwells within us, and that our faith is not a mere notion.

Well may this be called "the armour of light." Beautiful and glorious as is the appearance of a splendid army, all equipped in burnished and shining armour; the church is far more beautiful in the eye of God and his servants. "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Cant. vi. 10. "He beautifies the meek with salvation." The most beautiful ornaments that this life can shew are—not "the wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel"—but the graces of the Holy Ghost—"the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit."

*Put you on*, my brethren, then, this armour. You are not clad in it by nature. It must be acquired through grace. Day by day you need it afresh: day by day go for it to Jesus. He is exalted to bestow every gift upon you. Apply constantly to him for strength, to bring forth all the fruits of the Spirit. He will enable you to put on, now, the whole armour of God, and to fight in it, under his banner, as a soldier of the cross: and when, at his command, you joyfully put it off, he will deck you with far more glorious apparel, and you shall take up that song,

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." Take heed, however, in "putting on" this armour, that it be the genuine "armour of light." The subtlety of Satan is especially shown in seducing us to adorn ourselves with his own tinsel, as he knows that then he can easily overcome. Beware of pride, self-wisdom, and high-mindedness. Seek not after new things in religion. Seek after old things. The great things which you daily want are what Christians have from the beginning wanted; Christ your righteousness, in his obedience unto death; Christ your sanctification, through his Spirit imparted to your hope: Christ "in you the hope of glory:" Christ your life, and your all. "Put on Christ, and you put on the armour of light."

## IV. THE MOTIVES TO ATTEND TO THIS WORK.

"It is high time to awake.—Our salvation is nearer than when we believed; the night is far spent, the day is at hand."

The motives are fourfold—This is the hour of salvation—the manifestation of it is approaching—"the night is far spent—the day is at hand."

1. THIS IS THE HOUR OF SALVATION—"it is high time."

The original (ωρα ημας ηδη) signifies "it is already the hour for us." Our Lord says, "Ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh." In another place we are told, "To-day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts." And in another place this is called "the accepted time, and the day of salvation." Here it is the hour—an hour to escape from hell—an hour to attain heaven. But an hour! O think of the limited season of grace! and let it quicken every step in your spiritual course. O careless souls, awake. The longer you continue in a course of sin, the harder you will become. THIS IS THE HOUR in which you ought to awake. I bring it to one hour, and I say, the probability is, unconverted sin-

ner, that if you awaken not from the sleep of sin this hour, you never will, till you awake in hell. It is not certain—for none can fathom God's grace—but the riches of his grace gives you this hour; and if you trifle with it, it is really too probable that you will continue to trifle with it, till you be lost for ever. Some of you have lived fifteen, some twenty, thirty, fifty years in this world: you have had all the means of grace that you can expect to have. You had, in former years, less provoked God by continued sins, your hearts were less hardened, and your consciences less seared. Experience shows that the young are more easily awakened than the aged. I beseech you then, seize the present hour; never will you have one more favourable. Your case is now not hopeless, the hour is continued: but oh, now, *now* flee from the wrath to come. Jesus now stands with arms wide spread to welcome your return. He sends me to you. As his ambassador, I sound in your ears his gracious invitation. "Be ye reconciled to God.—Give not slumber to your eyes" this night till you have fled to him, and cast upon him your guilty soul.

2. THE MANIFESTATION OF SALVATION IS APPROACHING.

By "our salvation is nearer," the Apostle means the full manifestation of our salvation: the same sentiment which our Lord had expressed when he told his followers, "Then lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh," (Luke xxi. 28.) and which the Apostle expresses when he says, "Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Heb. ix. 28.

Salvation is indeed begun now. "By grace ye are saved." The believer has already received a salvation in the pardon of his sins, his regeneration, justification, adoption, and sanctification. But this is only *the earnest* of what he will have hereafter. He is now struggling with trials and temptations, with sorrows and difficulties. His body is weak: his soul is weak: he has times of darkness and mourning and conflict. But soon will salvation be manifested, and the whole church triumphant shall sing,

"Allelujah! Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God."

A blessedness as it regards *each individual believer* takes place *first*, when he 'departs to be with Christ,' but salvation is more fully manifested, "as it regards the whole church," when Christ shall come, and the dead saints be raised, and the living saints be changed, to dwell with him in glory for ever. Then indeed will be fully seen, and universally acknowledged, the blessedness and glory of salvation. It is coming on fast, every day brings it nearer; it may burst upon us at any moment. Are you watchful and prayerful? Are you looking, praying, and labouring for Christ? Are you clothed with the armour of light? Happy, happy Christians! you are continually approaching nearer and nearer the "great, and exceeding, and eternal weight of glory." Now then, pass not your time, your little remaining time, in slumber. You have but a short period to confess Christ, to labour for him, to be honoured with bearing his reproach, and suffering for his sake. Can you sleep on the very verge of his glorious presence! "Awake, awake; shake thyself from the dust; put on thy beautiful garments;" for salvation is very near.

3. THE NIGHT IS FAR SPENT.

The apostle calls our time here, the time of "night." So it is to Christians: to the world it is all their time of happiness; but the best things of the world are worse than the worst things of the Christian. It is called "night," as it is his state, his only period, of darkness, trials, and sorrows. When the sun sinks in the west, then comes night. Our sun is now gone down for a season. Thus our Lord speaks on this point; "A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again a little while and ye shall see me. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. Ye now have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

While Christ is absent, how can we fully rejoice? But "the night" of that absence "is far spent." Time is rapidly rolling on; the prophetical word is rapidly accomplishing; we know of but little that we can assuredly say will intervene between us and the return of our beloved Lord; four thousand years passed before our Lord's first coming; nearly two thousand have since passed; and the shaking of the nations, and the uprooting of ancient things, bid the Christian to lift up his head, in hope that "the night is indeed far spent, and the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Then let us "arise and trim our lamps, and go forth to meet the Bridegroom." Let him find us waiting, and through the hours of darkness using our talents for him, and longing for the glorious hope of his appearing.

4. THE DAY IS AT HAND.

The day of our Saviour's coming is emphatically in the scriptures, The Day. Of this St. Paul speaks, (1 Thess. v. 2.) "For yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." St. Peter informs us in similar words, (2 Peter iii. 10.) "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." The world has been long in the night of sin and Satan, which has spread darkness over the whole earth. Just as night veils the face of creation in one sombre hue, and all is obscure: and the light of day removes the veil, and we see the fields, and the trees, and the rivers, and the hills, and all the beauties of nature clearly and distinctly spread before us; so is there a day coming on, which will remove the darkness spread over the spiritual world, when God, according to his promise, "will destroy the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations." (Isaiah xxv. 7.) We shall then see the truth in reality of spiritual things with all the vividness and clearness of full day.

This is indeed "a day of wrath" to the wicked; often called "the great day; the last day; the day of the Lord's anger; the day of visitation; the day of judgment." A day full of gloom to those who have neglected Christ and

his salvation. The whole scripture travails with the burden of this day. It is typified in the deluge, as to its universality; in the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, as to the mode; and in the destruction of Jerusalem as to its special bearing on all who have the form of religion, but not its power. O unconverted men; the day is at hand; the wrath is coming; the Lord is near; flee, flee from the wrath to come. As Noah warned the old world, we warn you; as Lot testified for God, we testify to you; as the apostle preached in Jerusalem, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation," (Acts ii. 40.) so we now preach in your ears full remission of all your sins through faith in Jesus, and the free gift of the Holy Spirit to all that ask and seek. Your blood will be upon your own heads. "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

For it is "a day full of blessing" to every believer; the most joyful and happy of all the days that his eyes ever beheld. The whole church is waiting for it; "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." (Rom. viii. 22, 23.)

O the glories of that day! "The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, and then shall he sit on the throne of his glory:" and he will say to his people, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." They rise to meet their Lord; they enter into his joy; they view his glory. Then is the promise fulfilled, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne;" they "reign as kings and priests unto God and his Father," and are "ever with the Lord." It is the sun that makes the day. It is

the Sun of Righteousness, fully beaming and shining upon us, that makes this day of glory.

And how sweet the thought that it is "at hand!" O could we but always realize this, and have our "conversation in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body," how truly blessed might we be even in our pilgrimage here! We are too apt to put off the day as a remote event. Because we are in health and strength, and have no symptoms of death, we think it is far away. Because Christians differ in their interpretations of the prophetic word, and many think that important events are yet to take place before Christ comes, we are losing the power and sweetness of the hope of his speedy coming: of its being, for aught we know, even at the very door. Millions will be in health and strength when Christ comes; millions will be thinking nothing of it. Let us be "hasting unto the coming of the day of God." It is our jubilee, it is our happy kingdom fully come.

The day is at hand; and can we sleep on the very threshold of heaven? Shall our souls be filled with worldly cares and distractions, while we hope that day is so near, when "sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads?" O let us mind our Saviour's plain direction, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life: and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." God grant us grace to arouse and bestir ourselves, and "walk in the light as children of light."

As my beloved children, then, I would now call upon you afresh to dedicate yourselves to God your Saviour. Cast yourselves anew, with all your cares, on him that careth for you. What eventful times are before us! How dark to the worldly mind! and how calculated to impress

every reflecting mind with seriousness. Trouble marks the day of Christ's coming; and all the elements of that trouble seem even now to be gathered together, and but restrained for a little season. Christians! expect trouble, but expect your salvation in the trouble; to you, all shall be well. You will have a fortress that can never be broken down, and you shall sing that song, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble."

## SERMON III.

REVELATIONS XVI. 15.

*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*

When our Divine Redeemer ascended from Mount Olivet to his seat at the right hand of God, in heaven, while the disciples were following him with eager eyes, and looking stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, "two men stood by them in white apparel." In that impressive moment, when every heart was filled with love and admiration, with desires and longings after Christ, they thus addressed them,—"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

The faithful followers of Christ, filled with ardent love to him, are afterwards frequently described as "waiting for their Lord; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," and even joyfully anticipating the time of his return. So eager were they in this expectation, that disregarding the predictions of the previously humbled, conflicting, and suffering state of the church, they expected his immediate advent, and the full triumph of his church;

this mistake the apostle was directed by the Holy Spirit to correct—"We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, that the day of Christ is at hand." There was first to be "a falling away, and the man of sin was to be revealed, the son of perdition, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."

The state of the church has been for a lengthened period painfully different from that of the Thessalonian church. Long has the Man of Sin been revealed, and probably now he may be near the end of his destined course, and fast ripening for his destruction. Yet has the church instead of eagerly expecting the coming of our Lord, grievously lost sight of this predicted event. His professed people have generally placed it at a remote distance: and satisfied themselves for the most part with substituting the day of their death, for the day of his appearing; and the near happiness of the disembodied spirit, for that more full and complete happiness, the gathering of the whole church in the glorious bodies of the resurrection, and their beatific vision of him "who shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day."

But blessed be God, there is again a greatly enlarged hope excited of our Saviour's speedy coming. Whatever error or infirmity may mingle with this hope—and we frequently see errors connected with attention to revived truths that we may not glory in man—the Christian will rejoice to see and receive the pure scriptural truth, by whatever means in God's Providence it may be brought before him, and will confess that truth, though he may have to undergo the reproach of holding concomitant errors, or of upholding consequences which he disclaims.

Believing this to be a subject which it may be peculiarly profitable at the present time distinctly to bring before

you, I have chosen the impressive words of my text for that purpose.

We shall consider—

1. THE PREPARATORY EVENTS.
2. THE COMING OF CHRIST AS A THIEF.
3. THE PRESENT DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS.
4. THE MOTIVES TO FULFIL THOSE DUTIES.

## I. THE PREPARATORY EVENTS.

The words of our text occur immediately after the description of the pouring out of the sixth Vial on the River Euphrates.

It is the opinion of the great body of those who have most diligently studied this sacred book, that the period of time since the first French revolution, is that peculiarly intended by the pouring out of the vials. Some consider these vials as successively poured out ; and others that they are poured out concurrently ; but in the view that they relate mainly to the present times, there is not indeed a universal, but a very general agreement among modern Protestant interpreters of the Book of Revelation.

It will be seen on comparing the two, that there is a striking parallel between the sounding of the trumpets and the pouring out of the vials. The sounding of the sixth trumpet is accompanied by the voice saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Loose the four angels, which are bound in the great river Euphrates." The general opinion also of able and sound interpreters of this book is, that the Euphrates means the Turkish nation, which first conquered the provinces near that river. Indeed, a passage in Isaiah viii. 7, 8, explains the symbol by referring it to the then king of Assyria, whose lands are now possessed by the Turks.

The pouring out of the sixth vial is upon the same river. We read as follows in the previous verses—"The sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I

saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

By the river Euphrates in this passage we must understand the same empire as in the former passage; and the pouring out of the vial and the drying up of the waters show us progressive decays of the Ottoman empire.

The history of Turkey for the last twenty years is the most striking of all commentaries upon this vial. Trace only events in our own recollection, and see if they do not shew, that the resources and the population of this empire have been gradually wasting away, and drying up. By the insurrection of tributary chiefs, by the Greek revolution, by the Russian war, by the battle of Navarino, by the taking of Algiers, by the plague, by fires, by the slaughter of Janisaries and Mamelukes, by earthquakes, by inundations, by cholera and plague, and by the wars of the Pacha of Egypt, that empire has indeed been awfully drying up.* 'Surely,' says one residing in 1831 at Bagdad, 'every principle of dissolution is operating in the midst of the Ottoman and Persian empires.' † Another eye-witness says, 'The circumstance most striking to a traveller passing through Turkey is its depopulation.' ‡

These things have, with rapid succession, devastated and reduced Turkey, and some of its greatest dangers arise from its own rebellious subjects.§

* Mr. Hartley has some striking remarks on the loss of population in the Turkish empire. He states that Constantinople is supposed to have diminished its population by 300,000 since the year 1812. See his Researches, p. 9.

† Mr. Groves. ‡ Mr. Walsh.

§ The following extract of M. de Lamartine's speech in the French Chamber of Deputies on January 8, 1834, is very striking, as conveying the views of one who merely surveys Turkey, as far as it appears, with the eye of a statesman. 'I wish that Turkey may not perish; that an extensive empire may not be trampled down to nothing, or driven into the deserts of Asia.' 'But what is the state of the case? Plains without ploughs, seas without vessels, rivers without bridges, lands without possessors, villages built with mud and clay, a capital of wood, ruins of desolations on all sides, are what constitute the Ottoman empire. In the midst of this ruin and desolation which

It is not yet made clear what is intended by the kings of the east, and by the three unclean spirits like frogs. Time, however, will soon develope these things. It is not improbable, that the kings of the east may mean the Jews, (Exod. xix. 6.) and there are many symptoms of unclean spirits abroad in the earth. Some have supposed them to be those agents of infidelity, superstition, and democracy, which are every where abounding ; like the frogs of Egypt, spreading over the whole once professedly Christian world ; loquacious, clamorous, disgusting, and pestilential, entering every house, and raising up every where the spirit for that general war of principles, which the very circumstances of the times led an able statesman to foretel as likely to take place. But events yet to come will more clearly develope the nature and efforts of these unclean spirits. Let us only be watchful over all our principles, receiving nothing but as it is according to God's word. All these things concur in leading us to the conclusion, that we are living at the time to which our Lord's solemn admonition more particularly refers. They have consequently much impressed my own mind as to the special duty to which we are now called.

Nor say that all this may be matter of doubtful disputation. The signs of the times are to be observed by those followers of Christ, who would escape his just rebuke—" How is it that ye cannot discern the signs of the times ?" Those of the present day are manifestly peculiar, and quite different from former times. Every thing is shaking : and

they have made, and make daily, some thousands of Turks in each province, —all concentrated in the towns, drowsy, discouraged, never working, living miserably upon the spoils of the labour of Christian and laborious races,— constitute the inhabitants and masters of that empire ; and that empire is alone worth the whole of Europe. Its sky is finer, its earth more fertile, its ports more extensive and more safe, its productions more precious and more varied, than those of any other country ; it contains 60,000 square leagues.' ' You see by this rapid sketch, that the Ottoman empire is no empire at all ; that it is a misshapen agglomeration of different races, without cohesion between them, without mutual interests, without a language, without laws, without religion, and without unity or stability of power. You see that the breath of life which animated it,—religious fanaticism—is extinct ; you see that its fatal and blind administration *has devoured the very race of conquerors, and that* TURKEY IS PERISHING FOR WANT OF TURKS.'—*Christian Lady's Magazine,* Feb. 1834.

it is inestimably valuable, if the Christian has a plain, practical, clear direction from him, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords : who presides over all events, and directs all things according to his will. If he tells us what to do, we may be sure that in following his directions we are safe and blessed.

It is in this sense of its importance that we now bring before you his statement. "Behold I come as a thief."

## II. THE COMING OF CHRIST AS A THIEF.

We will consider the nature of this coming, its suddenness, its destructiveness, its blessedness, and its aspect on benevolent exertions.

### 1. The nature of this coming.

It is necessary to consider the nature of this coming.

Able and excellent interpreters have referred it simply to his coming in the way of judgments upon his enemies, as when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman armies, and in the full, but merely spiritual triumph of his kingdom and my own mind was long satisfied with that interpretation. It is a generally-admitted principle, that there are only two leading comings of Christ personally and visibly : his first coming in the flesh to redeem us, and his second coming to be the Judge and Saviour. Whether that second coming be here referred to is the point to be considered.

Let it be first remembered that the whole spiritual Church of Christ, without exception, is expecting, as the most important and the greatest of all events affecting our world, the personal and visible coming again of our divine Lord. However Christians may differ as to their views of prophecy and the times and season of events yet to be accomplished, on this one point all are agreed,—Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, will suddenly come again to judge the world. While infidels and worldly men scoff at this, by all believers in God's word it is seriously and fully expected. To those living near to Christ, it is an object of joyful hope and expectation, aud the delay of it is rather painful and distressing, than desirable.

And while this fact is universally admitted, without wishing to speak as if the text were an absolutely clear prediction of Christ's immediate coming, similar expressions in other parts of the sacred scriptures have inclined me to think, that our text must refer to the personal coming of Christ, when he shall judge the nations, and save his people ; and when "unto them that look for him he shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

Our Saviour in the latter part of that discourse (in answer to the question, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?") refers, as is generally understood, to his second coming : he there uses these words—"Ye know not what hour your Lord doth come ; but know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready ; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." Matt. xxiv. 42—44.

The apostle Paul tells the Thessalonians—(1 Thess. v. 2.) "For yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night ; for when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them." The context evidently restricts the apostle's reference to that which is on all sides acknowledged to be the second coming of Christ.

The apostle Peter again, speaking manifestly and obviously of the same event, says, (2 Peter iii. 10.) "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." Here also the context determines the same reference to the second coming of Christ.

When we find our Lord, in the text, giving exactly the same description of his coming, on the pouring out of the sixth vial, it is an obvious inference that he must mean the same event—His personal, visible coming to judgment,

and that he enjoins his church, at this precise time, to be preparing for it.

If I be asked, What is meant by the millennium, and the judgment subsequent to that period? I cannot agree with those who say, the millennium has been misunderstood and is past: but I rather reply, I know not sufficiently the nature of the millennium, or of that final judgment described in Rev. xx. 11, 12. to set aside the plain statements and exhortations of other parts of God's word. God will clear up all difficulties by his Providence, nor does the physical difficulty of his being seen by every one concern us. He comes in the air, and the saints meet him there, (1 Thess. iv. 17.) and his omnipotence will fulfil all that his truth has declared.

The fullest account of the nature of his coming is given to us by our Lord himself, in the three views of it recorded in Matthew xxv. That of the ten virgins shews us the need of having our loins girded, our lights burning, and our being like those who wait for their Lord. God grant that the light of the divine truth, through the full gift of the Holy Spirit, may be possessed by us, and display itself in all our Christian profession! The parable of the talents shews us how responsible we are for the use of every thing we possess, to that Divine Master who has entrusted all to us. O may we, from love to him (not thinking him hard or austere), lay out ourselves and all we have, day by day, in his service! The last description there given, shews us first our King and Saviour coming in his glory, with all his holy angels, and acknowledging, before the assembled nations, all who have proved their faith in him by unwearied and compassionate love to his followers, and, secondly, his receiving them to "the kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the world." O most unspeakably momentous event? Well may the Christian's eye and heart be fixed upon it as the glorious object of his hopes—well may he be continually preparing for that day.

But while I have stated my view of the truth, I would

add—whatever, my brethren, may be the exact nature of the coming of the Lord, let us all be deeply impressed with the consideration, that the Lord has given us a solemn warning at the time of the pouring out of the sixth vial, the very era in which we are living, "Behold, I come as a thief." Let us take the words in their plain meaning, and look to our Saviour to fulfil his own truth, whatever that coming be, or whatever its connexion be with the pouring out of the sixth vial on the "river Euphrates."

2. We next consider ITS SUDDENNESS or unexpectedness "as a thief."

I have pointed out already several similar expressions in other parts of God's word. That in the Thessalonians is very striking. "When they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." There are parallel figures ; (Matt. xxiv. 27.) "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be,"—sudden, vivid, bright, conspicuous, visible to all ; there will be no mistake about it. So in another passage,—"As a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." See the sudden surprise of the animal entrapped in a snare that it cannot escape, and mark in that, the suddenness and universal surprise of the whole earth, —excepting God's people, for that day shall not take them unawares—at the coming of our Saviour.

Our Lord expresses this suddenness, most forcibly, when he says, (Matt. xxiv. 37—41.) "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away : so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. Then shall two be in the field ; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill ; the one shall be taken and the other left." What words can more impres-

sively describe the suddenness of our Saviour's coming? These warnings have always been profitable to Christians, and in every age of the church have been needful, seeing that death removes men without the least warning, and fixes unalterably their eternal condition. But the truth of our Lord's declaration will be exhibited in another and universal manner at the time of his appearing. Men will be at their respective businesses, and suddenly a light, eclipsing by its brightness the sun at noon-day, will make every other business be lost in the all-engrossing fact—"The bridegroom cometh:" the Lord of Glory appears. Women will be in their domestic employments, some in one way, and some in another; but in that moment every other care will vanish, every other work be laid aside, and all eyes fixed on "the white cloud," and the glory of "him that sits upon it," and every heart will turn inward and say, "It is the Lord?" Am I prepared to meet him? Can I stand before him? Shall I "be counted worthy to escape those things that are coming on the earth?"

This scene may take place for aught we know, very speedily: our eyes may soon behold it; we "do not assuredly know" any lengthened impediment in unfulfilled prophecy, from events previously to take place. Christians indeed interpret differently the order of events yet to be fulfilled—but there is no certainty that should interfere with the primary duty of being prepared for the immediate coming of Christ.

The apostle told the Thessalonians, "not to be soon shaken or troubled in mind, as though the day of Christ was at hand;" for "the man of sin" was to "be revealed." The man of sin has, in the general judgment of the Protestant church, been revealed; he is probably hastening to his end, and we seem now called to tell every unconverted sinner, "Be ye shaken: be ye troubled in mind, for the day of Christ is at hand;" and the Lord is approaching to "destroy with the brightness of his coming," the man of sin.

Important, however, as is immediate attention to our

Lord's instructions, given in direct connexion with events in the midst of which we are now supposed to be living, I do not feel that those instructions necessarily involve the "instant" approach of the Lord, but rather inculcate upon us the urgent and pressing duty of constant readiness, earnest desire, eager and joyful expectation of his coming, as a sudden event: expected, indeed, by THE CHURCH, but to the world wholly unlooked for. The position of the text, in my view, greatly increases to us, at this period, the urgent importance of the duty of being prepared for the day of Christ: while the directions are substantially the same as are again and again urged upon us, with constant reference to his coming.

3. ITS DESTRUCTIVENESS.

Much of the remaining portion of this book is occupied with the destructiveness of the day of Christ. MAHOMMEDANISM is dried up by the sixth vial. (Rev. xvi. 12.) "He shall come to his end, and none shall help him." (Dan. xi. 45; viii. 25.) We see the power of it now wasting before our eyes, and its utter destruction is at hand. Then shall it be said of POPERY—"that great whore, which sits upon the scarlet coloured beast," whose name is "Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth: Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit; her plagues shall come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine: and she shall be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." (Rev. xvii. 1—6; and xviii.)

Popery must also be viewed, not only as it is embodied in the Romish church, but as it reigns in the hearts of multitudes, who contend earnestly against Popery in name. The setting up of men's judgments and opinions against the word of God, is the spirit of Popery; the mixing of man's works with the merits of Christ as the ground of hope, in the Article of our justification, is another indication of the same spirit; every high thought that exalts

itself against Christ, shall be brought low, and "the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."

The awful destructiveness of this day is yet further developed by an invitation to all "the fowls of heaven, to gather themselves to the supper of the great God, to eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great."

The scriptures are full of declarations of this great day of God's wrath: "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." (2 Thess. i. 7—9.)

The apostle Peter speaks in a similar manner, "The heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, and reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men: when the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." (2 Peter iii. 7—12.)

O you who "know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," tremble, and be horribly afraid. Let "the terrors of death, and the pains of hell" take hold of you now—now, ere it be too late. These things are before you. You must pass through them. You may now be delivered from the wrath to come. "O account the long-suffering of our Lord" (now for above 1800 years from his first advent,) as a token that there "is salvation" for them that repent and believe. Now let his "goodness lead you to repentance:" and then the day of his coming shall be the day of your complete redemption.

We have farther to notice,

4. ITS BLESSEDNESS.

It is striking to observe how the scriptures connect its destructiveness and its blessedness. (Isaiah xxxv. 4.) "Behold your God will come with vengeance, even God

with a recompence ; he will come and save you." So in Luke xxi. 25—28, after showing "the distress of nations, and the failing of men's hearts for fear, when they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory," our Lord adds, "when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads ; for your redemption draweth nigh."

It is striking also, to observe how invariably the coming of Christ is presented before God's people, as an object of comfort and hope." I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

In this view the people of Christ are described as looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. "Ourselves, also," says St. Paul, "which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

The blessedness of Christ's coming consists, not only in its relieving the believer living on earth, from all the sins and sorrows, the weaknesses and temptations of his present state, but also in the complete gathering together, and reunion of the whole family of God, in the glories of their risen bodies, to dwell with their Saviour in the heavenly Jerusalem. So that it is a far higher blessedness than that which takes place at death. Then, only the spirit of a believer goes by itself to paradise : but at the coming of Christ the bodies of all the saints are raised, and his whole church is gathered together.

No wonder then that the petition is daily to be offered up, "Thy kingdom come," and that the closing wish of the sacred volume is, "Even so, come! Lord Jesus."

Now then, my brethren, think of these things. "The day of Christ is at hand;" "Two shall be in the field, the one taken, the other left." Taken! Where? O blessed surprise! O rapturous joy! O bliss unutterable, "caught up" with the risen saints; changed in a moment from a corruptible to an incorruptible body; from a dishonoured, weak, and natural body to a body glorious, powerful, and spiritual; and death for ever "swallowed up in victory." And this glory is rapidly approaching; O believer, "lift up your head," and rejoice with a "hope full of immortality."

But, unbeliever, tremble—thou art "left!" left where? in the general burning of the earth, the unquenchable flames—*left* where? Where "there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Left in that "everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." O awful, and most tremendous change for THEE! Working in the same field with a believer one moment, and the next separated from him as widely as hell from heaven! thy condition fixed in irretrievable woe and ruin, EVEN FOR EVER.

As the minister of the Most High, I warn you, and beseech you to think of these awful realities. "O flee from the wrath to come." Secure, like Noah, a refuge against the day of destruction of the ungodly; now, Jesus will intercede for you, the Spirit will work in you, the Father will receive you. "O turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?" Even the desire to turn to God is a token of good, and may lead you to hope that God is working in you. Wait patiently and constantly for him.

## SERMON IV.

REVELATIONS XVI. 15.

*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.*

In the preceding sermon on these words, we considered, I. The preparatory events before the coming of Christ, the peculiar circumstances being there pointed out under which our Lord spoke these words, at the time of the pouring out of the sixth vial on the river Euphrates, the very time in which we are living. We considered also, II. The coming of Christ as a thief, explaining the nature of this coming, its unexpectedness, its destructiveness, and its blessedness. We have yet to consider,

III. The present duties of Christians.

IV. The motives to fulfil those duties.

### III. THE PRESENT DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS.

"Behold it—watch—keep your garments." Or in other words, attention, vigilance, constancy.

1. Attention. Contemplate it much; view it with much meditation and prayer: with that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Let it have a realizing existence in your mind, and a pervading influence on your life.

While the world (nominally Christian, but in truth

greatly living without Christ) is disregarding it: or saying, if not in words, yet in their heart, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation:" (2 Peter iii. 4.) the true Christian will not be ignorant of the merciful reasons of God's delay hitherto, to bring men to repentance and salvation, or of the largeness and comprehensiveness of his designs, with whom "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

While there are in this last time *mockers*, who "walk after their own ungodly lusts," (Jude 18.) and who "scoff" at these things, the Christian will with holy joy "behold the Lord," coming with ten thousand of his saints, and will be earnestly "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

If some of those, to whom the church is indebted for a revived attention to this, its great hope, have mingled with it (as indeed from human infirmity, was to be expected,) notions that we consider unscriptural, and calculated only to prejudice men's minds; this subtle device of Satan, "transformed into an angel of light," will not turn away the faithful Christian from that which is the true position of his soul—"looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." (2 Peter iii. 12.)

Our Lord puts an awful question, which should be often revolved by Christians. When speaking of avenging his own elect, who "cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them:" and assuring his disciples that "he will avenge them speedily;" he asks them, "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" It appears as if his own people would be then greatly wanting in lively faith, and the world at large entirely without faith in his Almighty power, to punish his enemies and reward his faithful people. But few comparatively in the church are now believing with lively hope, and ardently desiring and waiting for his return.

My brethren, in our text the Saviour calls your attention to this subject. Keep it, therefore, steadily in your minds.

Search what the scriptures say upon it: read the Bible itself rather than human expositions, and you will find how full the Holy Scriptures are of his coming again. You will enter more into the meaning of those confessions which you are making every Sunday—'We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge.' 'I believe that he sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.'

Have a realizing view of this event, as one that will suddenly take place; and O what spirituality of mind, what superiority to worldly carefulness and anxiety, what holy diligence in duties, what a heavenly conversation is it calculated to raise you to! What need trouble you, if this all-engrossing, this unspeakably momentous, and to God's people inconceivably joyful event, be at hand? "The time is short: it remaineth both that they that have wives be as though they had noue: and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

Here is the right frame of the Christian's mind towards the things of the present life. Compare this with the way in which our Lord describes the men of the world as filled and engrossed with the things of this life before his coming (Matthew xxiv. 37—39. Luke xvii. 26—30.) and observe in what manner a suitable attention to the hope of our Lord's coming will be manifested as it regards this world's daily concerns and occupations.

May our God then give to you all a realizing attention to his sudden coming, and enable you so to "behold it," as most firmly to expect it, and most diligently to prepare for it.

2. VIGILANCE—"Blessed is he that watcheth."

In every age of the church, watchfulness has been the duty of Christians, and it is frequently urged with a special reference to waiting for God's appearing in behalf of his people. Thus Habakkuk in this posture of waiting for

God, says, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved." (Hab. ii. 4.)

Our Lord has much pressed this as one main duty of his people, with reference to his coming again. "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke xxi. 36.) "Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come," (Matt. xxiv. 42.) "at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all—Watch." (Mark xiii. 45—37.) He also gave us the parable of the ten virgins with special reference to this duty.

A duty thus brought before us by our divine master, evidently calls for our peculiar attention, and especially at such a time as the present.

Vigilance signifies the shaking off of all sinful negligence, worldliness and security, and taking heed that we be not overcome through the deceitfulness of sin, the subtilty of Satan, and the snares of the world; but are duly alive to our great hope in Christ and his service. I will consider it in its two exercises, against sin, and for performance of duty.

1st. Vigilance in AVOIDING SIN.

We observed "the unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet," during the course of the pouring out of the sixth vial. These we considered might denote the agents of infidelity, democracy, and superstition, which will probably be more distinctly marked in the course of events now taking place, and against which we shall have specially to watch, as they are more fully developed. We can therefore only refer to them in the general language of the Scriptures.

But there are some temptations common, indeed, to all

ages, but to which Christians are now peculiarly exposed, and to which we trust that it may be profitable to direct your attention as calling for especial vigilance.

LOVE OF THE WORLD is such a temptation. We are ready to think, "that a man's life" and happiness "consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." As the frog delights in mire and marshes, so our natural hearts cleave to this impure world. Wherever it is a leading desire to secure this world's good, and our ambition is to accumulate its wealth ; wherever our property is not considered and laid out as a talent for God, and wherever there is the wish to be conformed to this world, there is that love of the world, which is inconsistent with the love of the Father. O be on your watch against this snare— "Ye cannot serve God and mammon. They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition : for the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

THE SPIRIT OF UNBELIEF is another temptation. The torrents of infidel publications, which have deluged our country ; the natural pride of the heart ; "the profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called, which some professing, have erred concerning the faith," present a series of hindrances to the exercise of a simple and undoubting faith in the whole of God's word ; unbelief creeps in unawares, and leads the mind to doubts and hesitations respecting Divine truth ; hence attempts to lower the character and limit the extent of Divine inspiration, to explain away miracles, the obligations of the Sabbath, the doctrines of grace in our election in Christ before the world began, our regeneration by the Spirit, our free justification, adoption, and sanctification, our assured hope of glory, and God's keeping his people to the end. Now we must watch against this spirit of unbelief, and take God's word in its simplicity.

THE SPIRIT OF PERSECUTION actuates others. They

cannot bear that their long-settled notions should be disturbed, and are thus led to harshness and severity against those who differ from them. Our Divine Master seems to allude to this when he says, "But and if that servant say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men-servants and the maid-servants, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers." Luke xii. 45, 46.

THE SPIRIT OF THIS WORLD'S POLITICS is another great temptation, carrying away multitudes. Though our Saviour has declared—"My kingdom is not of this world," it is painful to see how the spirit of the world in this respect has marred many professors, and instead of being "poor in spirit, meek, hungering and thirsting after righteousness," they have become "heady, high-minded, despising others, and speaking evil of dignities." May God make you and all his children, watchful against this snare.

THE SPIRIT OF EXPEDIENCY is another dominant evil of the present day. Many seem to think that peace and harmony must be preserved, even though error be sanctioned. That spirit which gives up the things of God, for which a man feels no value, that he may obtain the applause of man, for which he thus shews that he has a supreme value, must be peculiarly obnoxious to the holy and righteous Jehovah. He will make the folly as well as the wickedness of this course manifest to all the world.

THE IDOLATRY OF TALENT is another snare of the present day. If men have talents, however applied—whether to unprincipled novels, or licentious poetry, or insubordination to authority, or religious errors—the world (and, alas, the church in some degree,) applauds and admires them. It is not the question what is the truth, but what is the genius, and power, and eloquence of the speaker, or writer; these are the attractions which multitudes follow.

THE SPIRIT OF INSUBORDINATION is another evil which we witness. Dissatisfaction with all rule and authority, and excessive desire for innovation. What a counterpart to the picture Jude gives us, do we see in the present state of things! "These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts, and their mouth speaking great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage."

Need I enlarge on the evil of "holding the truth in profession, but denying its power, and shewing none of its holy influence on the heart and life?" This is an evil common to a day of profession, where we too often see a ready consent to doctrines which were once held to be most obnoxious, unconnected with a holy life. Or need I speak of the spirit of division abroad among Christians? Seldom have they been more divided and subdivided under different leaders, with undue attachments to man, than at the present moment. I only glance at the spirit of running after something new, and being corrupted (2 Cor. xi. 8.) by the excitement of strange things, from their former simplicity of faith, hope and love. Against all these things we must be on our guard, remembering that Christ is at hand. Many have been ensnared and overcome because they did not watch; they were vain and high-minded, they despised others, they trusted in their own wisdom and strength—and so they fell. Do you then, my brethren, learn to walk very circumspectly, as surrounded on all sides with enemies, and with snares, and temptations of Satan. Be "not ignorant of his devices."

2nd. There is also, VIGILANCE FOR DUTY.

Inspired by the animating and quickening thought that the Saviour is coming—the Christian will be waiting for him in the lively discharge of all those duties which will have his Lord's special approbation when he does come.

CONFESSION OF CHRIST before men is such a duty. "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Our Lord has promised, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in

heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. x. 32, 33.) Now, expecting our Lord's return, how should we watch for all opportunities of confessing his cause, speaking a firm word for him before his enemies, rebuking those that sin, and acting as his witnesses, in the midst of an ungodly world.

SEEKING TO SAVE SOULS is another all-important duty —one about which the Christian should be all ardour, thought, and earnestness. Souls saved through our instrumentality will be "the joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ's appearing," of ministers, and, in its measure, of others also. Of all the great ends for which life was given, next to the glory of God magnified in our salvation, is the same glory magnified in our being instrumental in the salvation of others. O may we be but used for this! May we have the wisdom "to win souls." If they that "turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever," how eagerly, in the prospect of Christ's sudden coming, should we watch for opportunities of saving souls, gladly forwarding all those blessed institutions which God has raised up in this latter day for this end.

DOING GOOD TO OUR FELLOW-CREATURES, "especially the household of faith," should be another object for constant vigilance. See in how many varied ways it is brought before us in the parable of the goats and the sheep; and learn how watchful the people of Christ should be to obey the direction,—"To do good and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Never forget that "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

But I must not enlarge—the Christian is called by his heavenly Master to be ready to every good work, prompt and alive to all occasions, letting "his light so shine before men, that they may see his good works and glorify his

Father which is in heaven." O may you, my brethren, be watchful to attain this character every day.

3. CONSTANCY—"keepeth his garments."

Garments are made to cover and adorn us. Our first parents needed them not. When they fell, and knew that they were naked, they provided an utterly insufficient covering ; but when the plan of mercy was revealed, God himself clothed them. Garments are now a needful covering to protect us from the inclemency of the weather, and to invest us with ornaments and advantages not naturally ours.

You may see here the propriety and force of the figure which our Lord uses. His bride, the church, is thus described : "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white ; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." (Rev. xix. 8.) The way in which this linen becomes white had been told in a former chapter, where the apostle had been describing the "great multitudes of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands ;" and heard of them, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 9—14.)

The meaning of these figures is obvious. Our garments are, in plain language, our righteousness before God, which includes both our justification and our sanctification. For justification, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us through faith in him ; and for sanctification, the Holy Spirit is given to every believer, producing holiness in his heart and life, and making him meet for the heavenly inheritance. The blood of "Jesus Christ the Son of God, cleanseth from all sin." His righteousness is our title to heaven, and his blood, applied to the heart by the Spirit of God, "purges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God." Then follow the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, meekness,

long-suffering, faith, temperance, and these become the evidence of our justified state, and of our meetness for future glory.

Now this righteousness is to be *kept* with unshaken constancy. It is to be stedfastly adhered to and maintained, and to be preserved pure and undefiled. Believers must not, on the one hand, *lose it*. Do not let infidelity and the philosophy of this world, and man's wisdom and science, and the pride of human reason, rob you of your hope in the perfect, spotless, finished, and glorious robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, by faith imputed to you and reckoned as yours. Believers must not, on the other hand, *soil* their garments. Christians must aim to keep themselves unspotted from "the pollutions that are in the world," and "from all the filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit." Satan seeks to mar both our comfort and our holiness. Every sin to which he can tempt us, and every unholy temper to which he can seduce us, and every covetous, or impure, or proud, or vain thought, that he can lodge in our minds, is a spot upon our garments, which needs to be washed away in the blood of Jesus. Diligently must we study the sacred volume, and earnestly and constantly must we pray for help to be kept from his many snares. Let us then hold fast the Head, Christ Jesus. Adhere closely to him. He is "made of God unto you wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Build simply and entirely on him. Come daily to "the blood of sprinkling for a fresh pardon, and a fresh sense of acceptance. "Ye are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power." You want not your own righteousness to add to his, now to justify you before God. Your strength is not in yourselves; "walk in the Spirit;" desire above all things the constant indwelling of the Holy Ghost, that divine inhabitant of the Christian's body. Then you will be "led by the Spirit, rejoice in the Spirit of adoption, and mortify the deeds of the body." Then you will "keep your heart with all diligence:" you will be "spiritually-minded;" and "be careful to maintain

good works." "Walking with God," the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, now by faith ; you will be preparing to meet him when he appears, and to dwell with him in his kingdom for ever.

See then, O Christians, your present duties in immediate preparation for the day of Christ. Give your mind to them. Think of them again and again—pass not over them as a matter of little moment: it is your life, your eternal life, that is concerned. O be attentive, and circumspect, and constant, that when Christ comes, you may be able to say, "Lo, this is our God ; we have waited for him, he will save us: this is the Lord ; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." (Isaiah xxv. 9.)

## IV. THE MOTIVE TO FULFIL THESE DUTIES.

There is a two-fold motive, applying first to our fears ; "lest he walk naked, and they see his shame ;"—and secondly, to our hopes ; "Blessed is he that walketh." A motive of warning on the one hand, and of encouragement on the other.

But first, let us admire the wisdom and the love of our divine Redeemer, in giving to his people, at this time, motives specially adapted for strengthening their hands and animating their hearts to a fidelity in his ways. The warnings and encouragements are peculiarly seasonable and important for us now, when there are special temptations and trials at hand, while peculiar dangers surround us, while the enemy is full of devices and snares ; then the Captain of our salvation, our glorious Leader, sounds as a signal for all his hosts, a direction that should thrill through every Christian's bosom, and animate him to the most circumspect and constant efforts in the good fight of faith—"Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." The holy prudence arising from watchfulness and self-distrust, is a most important fruit of the grace of stedfast perseverance in the ways of Christ.

Let us consider the motive we have spoken of—First, as it is a MOTIVE OF WARNING—"Lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." Lest he lose that which is his defence and ornament. The Christian is indeed "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." But then he is kept in the way of fear of falling short; "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." One proof that our faith is genuine is, that it leads us, while depending on God's working in us, to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." Fear then, lest by negligence you fall short of believing Christ's righteousness, and fail of the sanctification of the Holy Ghost. Fear, lest it should *prove* that you have only "a name to live," only a national faith, dead and unprofitable, since then your self-deception will indeed expose you to tremendous shame. "Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. vii. 21.) And what "everlasting shame and contempt" will it be when false professors shall say, "Lord, Lord, open to us; and he shall answer and say to you, I know you not whence ye are. Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." (Luke xiii. 25—28.) The lesson which our Lord seeks to impress by this is, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate."

That we may have a clearer view of this warning, let us remember the situation of the believer who shall not walk naked, and whose shame shall not be seen. Of this, David speaks thus, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit

there is no guile." (Psalm xxxii. 1, 2.) As to guilt, shame, and condemnation, their sins are for ever blotted out, remembered no more, and all "cast into the depths of the sea."

But if a man prove by unbelief, unwatchfulness, and inconstancy, that he had a "form of godliness, without the power;" all his sins will be exposed to the most universal gaze. His hypocrisy, which specially lays a man open to shame, will be manifested. His worldliness, however he contrives to make it consistent with the appearance, though it is utterly inconsistent with the reality of Christianity, will be detected and developed; his selfishness, his impurity of heart, his vanity, will all be laid bare; his shifts to maintain a credible profession, in the success of which he gloried on earth, will all be fully exhibited. How awfully Daniel says, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Dan. xii. 2.) What confusion of face! What tremendous heart-sinking! What never-ending anguish! Well does Daniel in the same place say, "There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation to that same time." (Dan. xii. 1.) If men dread the shame of tattered, or worn out, or spotted and defiled garments; or the appearance, or the reality of poverty now, should they not above all things dread everlasting shame, everlasting nakedness!

O consider of this as at hand. See Christ coming to disclose men's characters; and let this salutary warning quicken all your steps in his service; and lead you to a diligent attention to those duties, to which he is now calling you.

But there is not only a warning, there is also,

Secondly, a MOTIVE OF ENCOURAGEMENT. "Blessed is he that watcheth."

The prophet Daniel has a similar encouraging promise. "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days," (Daniel xii. 12.)

which may well be considered as referring to this same period.

As the duties of faith, watchfulness, and constancy in the midst of many peculiar temptations, and prolonged waiting, are difficult: so, lest unbelief should creep in, lest we should faint while watching, or be disheartened while his coming is delayed, here is a most seasonable and refreshing blessing pronounced on those thus waiting for their Lord.

The blessing may be viewed, as it regards this life and the next.

As it regards this life, there is a present blessing. "Blessed is he."

There is a real blessing in waiting for our Saviour, and in expecting and preparing for his return. The highest happiness of man is in communion with his God, in the light of his countenance, and the joy of his salvation, in spirituality and heavenly-mindedness; and then is "our conversation in heaven," when we are looking from thence "for the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Every Christian whose heart has been raised to this glorious hope, will testify that the ways of Christ "are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths peace." The graces and tempers of the Christian bring true happiness here; see how our Lord, in the beginning of his sermon on the mount pronounces those possessing them to be truly blessed; and his judgment is infallibly true.

But there is a discriminating blessedness; a blessedness of preservation from evil. The believer shall be preserved in the midst of those awful and destructive judgments, which "the Lord cometh to execute on ungodly sinners." A place of safety shall be provided for him. As he has watched for the Lord, so his Lord will watch over him, and keep him. His safety and protection shall be insured in that approaching great tribulation, which is so rapidly coming on an ungodly world. Just as the ark was provided as a refuge for Noah in the deluge; a Zoar for Lot in

the overthrow of Sodom : a Pella for the first Christians in the destruction of Jerusalem ; so the Lord will provide for his people a refuge in the day of his judgments, a Jerusalem which cannot be destroyed by man.

There are many passages which furnish us with suitable encouragement for these times of trial, such as the 46th Psalm,—"God is our refuge and strength ; a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." So again, (Isaiah xxvi. 20, 21,) Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee ; hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold ! the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity." We may gather from these and many similar passages, that in those last judgments which shall come upon the wicked, God's people will, by following his directions, and entering the refuge which he shall provide, be graciously preserved from all evil. Our commission is, "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked ! it shall be ill with him ; for the reward of his hands shall be given him." (Isaiah iii. 10, 11.)

Think you not, that when the perishing world saw Noah floating safe in the distant ark on the swelling waves, they then felt his to be the blessed course ? And, as we may imagine many a perishing antediluvian cried out, 'O blessed preacher of righteousness, would I had but listened to thee !' So in that destruction which is yet to come on the world, will it be universally confessed, "Blessed is he" that believed, and foresaw Christ's coming, and watched and kept his garments. O my brethren ; follow, I beseech you, this only path even to temporal blessedness.

But as IT REGARDS THE LIFE TO COME. When the Saviour appears ; when the body is raised from the grave ; when all nations are gathered before him ; then the watchful Christian is he who shall enter into the joy of his Lord,

and who shall, before an assembled world, hear the address, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." What a blessedness is this—even an eternal blessedness? Blessed are they that do his commandments; that they may have right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city. (Rev. xxii. 14.) Fix your eyes, fix your hopes, on this scene of blessedness, if you would be carried above your present temptations. So did Moses, "he had respect unto the recompense of reward." So did the apostle, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." So did even our glorious Head. "For the joy set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame." O be you then "followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises." As the threatening of God warns you, so let the rich promise allure and constrain you to watch, and keep your garments. "It is a faithful saying, for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him he will also deny us." (2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.)

From the whole subject I draw three practical lessons.

1. FLY TO JESUS CHRIST.

If ever men were called to embrace the gospel, and be decided for Christ, they are now so called. As the time of the flood drew nearer, doubtless Noah more urgently preached righteousness, "when once the long-suffering of God waited, while the ark was preparing." The times are awful; they are awful in the conflict of men's minds; in the growth of both evil and good; in the shaking of the nations: in the wars and rumours of wars; in the temporary calms succeeded by the stronger agitations; in the uprooting of ancient institutions; in men's hearts failing them for fear "of the things coming." But they are far more awful, as these are the signs of the gradual advance of God's plans and purposes towards the last days, and as unrolling the prophetic word, shewing the approach of his judgments on the wicked, and the coming of the judge of

the whole earth. The signs of the times tell him who believes in God's word: 'The King of kings and Lord of lords is approaching. I may hear the last trumpet sound; I may see the heavens pass away, I may hear the shrieks and cries of the wicked, saying "to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. vi. 16, 17.) In such a day Christians are eminently called to a decided course, to a bold confession of Christ and his truth, before their fellow-men. Whatever shame or reproach they may have now to endure, O how infiuitely better is the present transient contempt of man, than that coming "shame, and contempt," which is "everlasting," and before the universe of God!

2. Walk closely with God.

"Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace." Make him your friend now in the day of ease and health, of peace and prosperity, who alone can help you in the day of wrath. Attend to his directions now, seek his favour who alone can raise you, in that day, above the general destruction which will overwhelm the ungodly. Attention, watchfulness, and constancy, are the parts of a close walk with God, to which our text directs you. Set him before you in all things. By that blessed Lord, who is the way, the truth and the life, seek to have continual "access" in every duty "through one Spirit to the Father."

3. Abound in good works.

Now is the precious seed-time of eternity. The whole use of time, talents, property, influence, is to glorify God now, and to sow the seed for the future harvest. What a sentence is that, "Their works do follow them!" What an unspeakable importance it attaches to all our works of love here! How zealous should we be in redeeming time, and in doing good to all around us. Let this subject quicken all our steps, that we "be not weary in well doing;" seeing that "in due time we shall reap, if we faint not."

# CARE OF THE SOULS OF OTHERS,

A

## SPECIAL DUTY IN THESE DAYS.

---

LUKE XIV. 21.

*Then the Master of the house being angry, said to his servant, go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.*

THE signs of the times are very remarkable. The movement over the face of the whole earth is such as to affect all men. We see on every side opposite principles mightily at work.

This has a dark side full charged with evil. We see Popery, Infidelity, and Lawlessness, opposing the Gospel of Christ with vast energy and success. We see also a diverging from the truth in the Protestant Church, on the right hand and on the left. One class professing to rise superior to prejudice, and manifesting a spirit of indifference and unconcern to the truths of God; a carelessness and easiness of principles that will favour Jew or Papist, Infidel or Radical, and for praise of liberality or for political ends, will part with power and authority which God

has intrusted to a government based on truly Christian principles: Another class, professing admiration for antiquity, in its eagerness for what is ancient, dwells chiefly on the forms of religion; as if things external, without faith, and without the living power of the doctrines of Christ and the energy of his Spirit, could avail for the preservation of our church aud our country from their many enemies.

But in the midst of all this darkness, God is more and more reviving the zeal and the graces of his church, and making more and more distinct his true servants. He has given to his people an earnestness and zeal for the wider and wider diffusion of Divine truth. They began in the midst of all the difficulties of the wars with revolutionary France, to spread the gospel in the remotest regions. They soon included the Jewish people. The zeal returned with a blessed reaction to our own land, and it is now visiting the streets and lanes, the alleys and the courts of our cities, and the hamlets and the cottages of our country villages.

Nor has the word of God left us without intimation of these things, and iustruction as to our duties concerning them. We have in the parable from which my text is taken, a prophetic announcement of the kingdom of heaven, and its reception on earth, and the duty of the church from age to age.

The parables of our Lord convey indeed, in their obvious and immediate application, most valuable instruction. The truths that lie on their surface are plain and powerful. By their lively figures they awaken attention, and impart practical lessons of unspeakable value to all believers in every age.

But they have also a more deep meaning relating to the kingdom of God, full of heavenly wisdom, and pregnant with riches and wider instruction, and specially applicable to us in these last days of the church. They plaut principles and truths in the mind, the elements of greater things that spread over the earth; like the acorn put in

the ground, which in due time, under the Providence of God, produces all the beauties, and height, and breadth, of the full-grown tree.

Such is the parable of our text. It arose from one of our Lord's hearers saying, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom" of God. Our Lord, ever alive to the spiritual edification of those who heard him, shews here how we may lose, and how we may gain, that blessedness. He points out also distinctly the character of his servants as earnestly calling all men to partake of this blessedness.

We have here, then, scriptural authority for that duty, which it is the especial object of the General Society for promoting District Visiting to bring before the church.

May the Spirit of our God graciously assist me in unfolding this part of Divine truth, as an encouragement to your efforts in carrying forward a work so full of important blessings to our fellow-men.

The whole parable is as follows.

"A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, come, for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it, I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them, I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came and shewed his Lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled, for I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

From this parable I will direct your attention to

1. THE INVITATION TO THE GREAT SUPPER.
2. THE REFUSAL BY THOSE BIDDEN TO PARTAKE OF IT.
3. THE BRINGING IN OF THE POOR FROM THE STREETS AND HIGHWAYS.
4. THE DUTY TO CARRY THE MESSAGE TO THEM.

## I. THE INVITATION TO THE GREAT SUPPER.

Let us notice here the feast provided, and the invitation to it.

1. THE FEAST PROVIDED.

We frequently find this description of the blessings of the gospel. Thus in the 22nd of St. Matthew, we read of the marriage-feast, and in the 19th of the Revelation, of the marriage-supper. This feast may be viewed as it refers to two seasons.

There is THE SPIRITUAL FEAST in the present blessings of the gospel bestowed upon all who truly receive it. As in a feast, there is every thing suitable and good for the body: so in the gospel of Christ, there is full provision for all the wants of the soul. We are ungodly and without strength; we are poor, and blind, and wretched, and naked, and miserable; under the curse of the broken law, and alienated from God, needing righteousness, and wholly destitute of it. Every one of our soul's wants are provided for in Christ Jesus. There is free forgiveness of all our sins through Christ: his death has atoned for all our guilt: his righteousness avails through faith for our justification; his Spirit regenerates and purifies. His body is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed, strengthening and refreshing our souls. "All things pertaining to life and godliness are given to us through the knowledge of Jesus Christ." His word is sweeter than honey, and more nourishing than milk, and more reviving than wine, "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. God has given us also eternal life in Christ Jesus, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Credit only God's love to you, vile and sinful as you

are, as it is revealed in the sacrifice of Christ putting away your sins, and you have unfailing springs of holy joy and gratitude, that may well be compared to a marriage-feast, full of heavenly and eternal joys and glories.

There is also THE FEAST IN GLORY yet to come. The gathering together of all God's saints from every age and from every land, in the heavenly and eternal kingdom promised to them that love him. What a feast is this! Thus St. John sets it before us, Rev. xix. 6. "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. And he saith unto me, write, Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and he saith unto me, these are the true sayings of God."

Think of the glorious company there met together. It is "the general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven." The glorious sealed company of one hundred and forty-four thousand, and the innumerable multitude out of the great tribulation added to them. Who can describe the splendour, and bliss, and glories of that company of kings and priests unto God, even the Father. It only waits for the return of our Lord in glory. It is the consummation of our happiness. It is the going no more out from the presence of him "in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

That we may share its glories, we must in faith and love partake of the gospel-feast ourselves now, and seek to bring others to do so. How clear are our Lord's words! "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood,

hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" We must, then, feast on Christ now, if we would feast with him for ever. We must also labour to save others. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

2. THE INVITATION TO THIS FEAST. Our Lord says, the Master of the feast "bade many." We have here the invitations of the Gospel from age to age. Like other prophecies, it has a growing accomplishment, embracing in distinct order, the events which it comprehends.

THE JEWS had the first invitations of the Gospel, and ought still to have them whenever the Gospel comes afresh to a new place. "I am not sent," our Lord himself said "but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He came first to his own. Everywhere they were to have, and they had the first bidding to the Gospel Supper. They were the kinsmen of the Lord, and had thence a prior claim to his invitation. But they refused to come, and then it passed over to others.

THE VISIBLE CHURCH in our day has long been bidden to the marriage. Great patience has our God had with the Gentile Churches, and especially with the nations of Europe or the Western Empire. Long have they been invited to the Gospel feast. Everywhere the words of Christ have gone out proclaiming, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out:" and in our day probably some of the last calls of this gracious invitation are now sounding through the visible churches.

## II. THE REFUSAL BY THOSE BIDDEN, TO COME AND PARTAKE OF IT.

"And he sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready : and they all, with one consent, began to make excuse."

The time when they refuse is THE SUPPER TIME ; the close of the day. In a similar parable in Matt. xxii. it is

called (αριστον) the dinner-time, which was an earlier meal. In that parable the destruction of Jerusalem was foretold (verse 7.) Here it is called the supper (δειπνον) which was a later meal, and here the destruction of Jerusalem is omitted as a past event. Dinner and supper are distinguished in a former verse of this chapter, (verse 12.) St. Matthew seems, therefore, in the parable which he records of the marriage feast, to point out an earlier, and St. Luke to point out a later, dispensation of the Gospel.

In the east, it was not the custom to go to the feast till messengers had announced that all was ready. A double message was sent, first an invitation to the feast, and then an announcement that all was ready. The guests here had made, then, an outward profession, that they would come, and it was perfectly reasonable to expect their performance at the time.

When our Lord invited THE JEWS to partake of the Gospel feast, their accepted time was come ; their previous reception of the law and the prophets, their professed waiting for the Messiah and his kingdom would, if it had been real, have led them joyfully and heartily to have welcomed his salvation when it was "first" set before them.

Then we GENTILES became his visible Church, and have been invited to the Gospel feast. Our previous baptism, and our Christian profession, demand from us a glad reception of the message, and a ready partaking of the provision of mercy made for us in Christ Jesus, and that we should be a people everywhere living on Christ's fulness, and feeding on him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

THE SUPPER-TIME has, as we have seen, a special reference to the end of the Gentile dispensation and the feast in future glory, which is hastening to us, and near at hand. This season bids us all now with special force and earnestness, to "press into the kingdom." It calls us to be like the wise virgins ; to gather oil in our vessels diligently. It bids us to put on the wedding-garment, to

watch and be ready. This is the critical situation, in which the professing Church of Christ is now placed. The present season then in the largest and most complete sense of the parable, is, to us, the supper-time.

THE REFUSAL OF the invitation is described as very general. "They all with one consent began to make excuse." The past history of the Church painfully illustrates this. Look at the Jews. "He came to his own, and his own received him not." The chief priests, Scribes, and Pharisees, very generally rejected the Gospel. Even to the last, they are described as judging themselves "unworthy of eternal life," and at length, opposing the sending of the Gospel to us Gentiles, the wrath of God came upon them to the utmost.

But we need not look at the Jews only. The Gentile nations have fallen into the same unbelief. What countless numbers are there of baptized idolaters in Romanism, and of baptized infidels in Protestantism. The revival of godliness has indeed been very blessed, but it has been rejected by professing Christendom at large. The visible Church of Christ is in as affecting a state now as the Jewish Church was BEFORE ITS REJECTION, and the revival of godliness is not greater in proportion than the revival of godliness among the Jews in the apostolic age. There is a most extended and fearful apostacy all through the professedly christian kingdoms of the western empire, in which vast multitudes have throughout rejected the Gospel feast. The analogy of God's dealings with the Jewish nation, concurs with the word of prophecy in giving a solemn warning of God's awful judgments yet to come on unbelieving Christian nations.

THREE REASONS are given for this refusal, and they are similar to the three which choke the seed in the thorny ground ; that is, the riches, cares, and pleasures of this life (Luke viii. 14.)

They are all very plausible, and apparently reasonable excuses ; but they all manifest a preference of other things to the engagement which they had made with the master

of the house, and a real dislike to partake of this feast. And when we add, that the master is the Lord of all, and everything that men have is really his, what tongue can utter the proud rebellion, and wickedness of refusal.

The first excuse is THE LOVE OF WEALTH. "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go to see it. I pray thee have me excused." This excuse is vain, and palpably so. Having bought the ground, he might have seen it at any time. It only shews he delighted in his earthly possessions more than in his Master's honour and society. O let us take heed that there be not such a heart in us.

The second excuse is BUSINESS. "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them, I pray thee have me excused." This excuse proves also its own vanity. Having bought the oxen, his desire to prove them only manifested his preference of his own concerns to the Master's feast and company.

The third excuse is PLEASURE. "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." This is the least reasonable of all, and yet is alleged with the greatest effrontery. It is saying, I love my private domestic pleasures better than fidelity to my engagement, and a share of that feast which my Lord has provided. Let us also take heed not to be "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."

There are spiritual as well as worldly excuses, that prevent men coming to Christ, and welcoming his supper, which correspond to these worldly excuses; fancying ourselves to be rich, busy with attention to the outward works of religion, and, without fulfilling its duties, taking its comforts and privileges to ourselves; these things may as much keep men from partaking of salvation as the most obvious worldly temptations. Search your own hearts, brethren. Do you really believe the full love of God to your souls yourselves, and have you come at the Master's call to his feast, aud are you standing in the posture of his obedieut people waiting for his coming.

See, too, in these things the true state of the Church of

Christ, and the earnest and pressing need there is of rousing men everywhere to earnest attention to the things belonging to their best interest.

## III. THE BRINGING IN OF THE POOR FROM THE STREETS AND HIGHWAYS.

"So that servant came and shewed his Lord these things. Then the Master of the House being angry, said to his servant, go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind."

The displeasure of the Lord of the feast at the refusal of his invitation, is first noticed. There was just cause of anger. They had engaged to come, he had made suitable preparation for them, and they made light of his kindness and their own promises, and thus equally insulted him and injured themselves.

And, O my brethren, how serious an evil, how fearful a guilt it is to refuse the grace of the Gospel. Thus the word of God every where represents it. "He that despised Moses's Law died without mercy. Of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace." An apostate Christendom, how awful! The spotless purity of God's justice, and the mighty current of his love, are not to be thus impeded. God takes occasion, by man's sin, the more to magnify his own righteousness and loving-kindness. The bringing in of a despised and humbler class to partake of the favours thus rejected by the more privileged, is God's righteous moral retribution. They had only themselves to blame, that they lost all the superior blessings which they first refused, and which others, through this refusal, though once inferior in outward advantages, finally obtained. The love of God stopped in its course, and thrown back on the fountain head, only finds new channels for its wider diffusion.

The servant is directed to make farther and fuller invitation by going into the streets and lanes of the city.

When the chief priests and the Rulers, the Scribes and Pharisees, rejected the heavenly message, our Lord and his apostles preached it among the poor and afflicted, and they embraced it, and the Gospel afterwards passed on to Samaria and the neighbouring countries.

But the Scriptures give us an interpretation of the city, which leads us to a larger and a present application. There is another city, the mystical Jerusalem. (Rev. xi. 8.) We read of "the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." We have here the visible Church of Christ among the Gentiles. So we read at the pouring out of the seventh vial, "the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell." In this city there are streets and lanes that have been comparatively neglected. Our parable then seems here to refer to those parts of the visible Church that from various causes have hitherto not had the Gospel. The Gospel message has not yet hitherto been directly set before them. There is to be within the pale of the visible Church an enlarged invitation to hitherto neglected classes to accept the Gospel.

And observe the necessity of this invitation is that of the supper-time being come. While all was ready, the house was not furnished with guests. The period of goodness to them was nearly over. It is at such a period as we now live in, the last days, that we may expect the most pressing invitations to go forth, and the largest company to be gathered.

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE GUESTS to be brought in, is minutely and purposely detailed,—as "the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind;" the most unlikely of all classes to go to a marriage-feast, and to be welcome guests there. O how rich is that abounding grace which makes the unbelief of man the very occasion of a still more enlarged display of sovereign mercy and love! The largeness of the invitation corresponds to the beautiful

mind of the Master. The very repetition of the terms, poor, maimed, halt, and blind, is delightful ; it may convince the burdened sinner that nothing should keep him from the blessings of the Gospel. It seems also to intimate that the chief ingathering to the Gospel of Christ at the time of the Supper, will be among the lower classes, and those hitherto in ignorance. Let the hard-hearted false liberalism of these evil days, spend all its wisdom and eloquence in details of abused charity, and in enlarging on the folly and mischief of liberally relieving the distresses of the poor, and the uncertainty of the impositions which they practice. All this shall stir us up to consider the case of the poor more fully, and personally ; to visit them the more, and so to insure to ourselves the promise, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor, the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble." We know too well the dreadful deceitfulness and wickedness of all hearts, our own as well as theirs, to be stopped in our works of mercy by objections, of the very thing which made our Saviour Christ pity our guilt, and come himself to heal us, and then appoint us his people, "the salt of the earth," to stay its corruption.* Of all the means of effectually aiding and relieving the necessities of the poor, none can be more efficient than the systematic visiting of faithful Christian visitors, animated by the wisdom and the love of Christ Jesus, and patiently following him in his blessed course of going about doing good.

There is yet one farther message of mercy ; the servant returns again ; and so vast is the house, he has to say, "Yet there is room," and then he receives the closing message, "go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." It is not merely the city that is to be searched ; the country must not be neglected, the highways and hedges must not be disregarded. O precious words ! "Yet there is room." Sound it through every corner of the habitable globe ; let

* See Bosanquet's 'Rights of the Poor to Christian Almsgiving vindicated.'

the healing joyful sound penetrate every lane and every cabin, every highway and every hidden corner.

The words especially designate places out of the pale of the visible Church, and seem particularly and immediately to refer to the heathen. But alas, there are in our own country heathens too, in an awful state of destitution, and the words include the most degraded and ignorant, whether in natural or moral circumstances.

You observe compulsion is connected with this last message. Not the compulsion of persecution, as we see in the apostate Church of Rome, which knows not the mind of Christ, and obeys not his word, "in meekness instruct those that oppose themselves," and has murdered millions of faithful followers of Christ, who loving not their lives unto death, have from age to age been witnesses to his truth.

There is a compulsion of love from man, and a compulsion of Providence from God. The compulsion of love is that which we every where see in St. Paul. "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." Let this be our compulsion.

And there is a compulsion in Providence close at hand and quickly coming on; even the last tribulation which God will send on the nations, to gather in the vast multitude which no man can number, before our Lord returns in his glory. The Providence of God in the day of this tribulation will furnish a compulsory aid that will give vast additional sanction and power to all the invitations of the Gospel. And so his house shall be filled. Nothing less will content our Redeemer. He has a full heart, and he will have a full house. Here is the triumphant issue of all his dispensations. His house full; the whole earth filled with his glory, and the "kingdoms of this world, the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ for evermore."

Such, my brethren, is the instructive parable brought before us; and I proceed now to the practical application.

## IV. THE DUTY TO CARRY THE MESSAGE TO THE POOR.

You see how each one who is brought into the happy service of Christ is to be employed. You see how actively all who belong to him will be engaged, going about entreating men every where to come in. They share the large and liberal love of their master, and delight to be occupied in spreading his loving-kindness.

Brethren, this is a duty which belongs to every true disciple of Christ. The great and urgent duty of all those who have themselves come in to the gospel feast, is to bring in also those who still remain without. There are those who, because ministers are watchmen, and have a special office to turn the wicked from his evil way, think it does not lie upon laymen "not to suffer sin upon their neighbour;" and because St. Paul at Ephesus taught not only publicly from house to house, and warned every one night and day with tears, they would confine both the duty and the privilege of all religious instruction of others to the ministry. But this is contrary to plain, direct, and often repeated instructions of God's word. If you do not confess your Saviour now, he will not confess you hereafter. All Christians are under the solemn obligation of imparting to others the saving truths which God has given to them. "Freely ye have received, freely give. Shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." We have here its two distinct features, aggressive benevolence, and its contrast, separate purity. St. Paul gives us many names of men and women, beloved for their work's sake, who laboured with him in the Lord. (Rom. xvi. 1 Cor. xvi. Phil. iv.) The intimations in the Epistles of those thus helping in the work of Christ are numerous. Giving "ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word," is the chief office of the public teacher. (Acts vi. 4.) "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should

seek the Law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts." (Mal. ii. 7.) Thus while this is our primary duty,—to seek out that which was lost, (Ezek. xxiv. 4.) it is also the duty of the people to seek instruction from their minister. There lies also upon every private Christian, as much as upon every minister of Christ, the duty of exhorting all within their reach: "Exhort one another daily while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." O how impossible it is for us in the ministry, though multiplied in numbers, to meet all those daily necessities which a fallen world presents before us. Truly, my brethren, we cannot if we would, and we would not if we could, deprive you of the unspeakable blessing of personally seeking the spiritual welfare of the destitute around you. The wonderful change wrought in the large town of Kidderminster under Baxter's ministry was chiefly promoted by 'the zeal and diligence of the godly people of the place, who thirsted after the salvation of their neighbours, and were in private his assistants; and being dispersed through the towns, were ready in almost all companies to repress seducing words, and to justify godliness, and to convince, reprove, and exhort men, according to their needs, as also to teach them how to pray and to sanctify the Lord's day.*

The season at which this duty is especially urgent is the "supper-time:" that is, the last days of "the times of the Gentiles;" the close of the season of grace; the very time in which we live; and we now behold the servants of Christ stirred up to those remarkable exertions which are witnessed on every side. Bible, Missionary, Gospel Propagation, and Jews' Societies, go forth into the outskirts of Christendom; but Christian Knowledge, Church Extension, Education, Pastoral Aid, Foreign Aid, Reformation, and District Visiting Societies labour within the pale of the visible Church, and with institutions for the literally blind, and

* Baxter's Reformed Pastor is full of valuable instruction and exhortation on Pastoral duties.

deaf, and distressed of every character, they are fulfilling the prediction before our eyes. In the Anniversaries of those Institutions, now taking place on each day in this metropolis, we have visible proofs of this work of love. We trust that they are all yet to have a vast increase and glorious enlargement of means and exertions. But the time is short; much is to be done in a little time. The marriage-supper is at hand: all is ready. They are all temporary institutions; but a great work is to be done by them, and a great blessing to accrue to Christians through them. The urgency of the duty is pressed by quickening commands. Go out *quickly*. No time is to be lost. Eighteen hundred years of Gospel grace have rolled away. It is now late in the day; but a short interval remains, during which the servants have to make up the wanting number.

The Lord thus in these last days furnishes us with the greatest possible encouragement in all our efforts amongst the poor. As he himself here especially commissions such efforts, so in his predicted accomplishment of them, he gives us the fullest assurance of success. And what a blessed hope it is that we may each bring in some guests to that glorious banqueting-house of goodness, who would otherwise have been left to perish in the unfrequented lanes of the city, or in the desolate highways and hedges of the land! Yes, dear brethren, we may bring to share with us in the heavenly glory an innumerable company who shall be our joy and crown through eternity.

The General District Visiting Society furnishes you with full openings in this work of mercy. It was formed in the year 1828, and has now subsisted thirteen years. The object of the society is to promote a general and systematic visitation of the poor, with a view of improving their temporal and spiritual condition: which is the very object designed in the commission which our Lord gives in the text. Its constitution is in perfect unison with our Established Church: its third rule being that the business of the society shall be conducted by a central Committee of members belonging to the Church of England, with all

clergymen who are members of the Society. It has had from time to time, the testimony of leading bishops in our Established Church, Bishop Wilson of Calcutta, Bishop Sumner of Winchester, the late Bishop Otter of Chichester, Bishop Sumner of Chester, and the late Bishop Ryder; which two last-named Bishops commended it to the clergy in their charges: Bishop Ryder stating that an association of District Visitors selected by the Clergy was pre-eminently serviceable in the discovery, ascertaining, and relief of the temporal wants of the people, and the far more difficult task of detecting and bringing to light their spiritual necessities, and the causes of their moral and religious defect. Bishop Ryder adds, 'Conducted in subordination to the discipline of the church, and in subservience to the wishes and labours of a pious and devoted minister, and under his superintendance and control, such an association will, under the divine blessing, prove the most hopeful means of enabling him to lift up his standard against his enemies when they come in like a flood, and of stemming the overflowings of ungodliness which make us afraid. Such a system blesses both those who give and those who receive. It is calculated in an especial degree to strengthen, rivet, and endear the union between the minister and the best of his flock; to renew the links of mutual harmony between the rich and the poor. It has also by fair inference the sanction of St. Paul, in his frequent acknowledgment of his debt to his fellow-workers of both sexes.'

Hear also the testimony of the parochial clergy of St. Mary's, Islington, as given after many years experience of the working of the Islington District Visiting Society. They say in their report just published: 'Of the good resulting from the increased operations of their District Visiting Society, the clergy feel that they can make no adequate report. They could easily, for instance, tell of individuals relieved in distress, taught in ignorance, or comforted in sorrow, through the agency of this society. They could tell more, even of souls saved through the

divine blessing on this instrumentality. But of the whole effect, past, present, and eternal, of 38,660 Christian visits in a year, they feel incompetent to judge. It is fully known only to the infinite God. So many and so great, however, are the good effects continually manifested from the labours of this society, as to call forth their warmest thanks, first to the God of all grace, next, to his self-denying servants, the visitors, their "helpers in Christ Jesus," and likewise to all who kindly aid the Society with their pecuniary contributions and their prayers for the divine blessing. They have also reason to know that this society calls forth much of good feeling and gratitude on the part of the poor toward the visitors, as their best friends, and toward the subscribers, as their kind benefactors. And thus this society forms a link in the golden chain of charity, which should bind together all classes in the parish. On all accounts, the clergy have much satisfaction in recommending the District Visiting Society to the continued and increased support of the parishioners.'

The blessed effects of the Wheler Chapel District Visiting Society in Spitalfields, which I had the privilege of forming when I ministered there, and which continues to prosper to this day, have been very extensive. Good of a similar kind has arisen from the society formed in the country parish where I now dwell. It is beneficial both to the visitors and to the visited. All connected with it seem the better for it. The communicants of our congregations are the only efficient visitors I have found, and we have still eminently to speak of the women who labour with us in the gospel.

My venerable and beloved friend and fellow-labourer for many years in the Church Missionary Society, the Rev. Josiah Pratt, in a Report of St. Stephen's District for 1834, testifies: 'The experience of every year furnishes additional evidence of the peculiar advantages of Visiting Societies in the present state of the public mind and morals. The Christian patriot can scarcely find any other way of serving his country so effectually as contributing to the

universal establishment and efficient operation of these institutions. The evils which threaten the country are searched out in their first springs, and the corrections and remedies which God has provided are applied to these evils.'*

With these testimonies what need I to say more! The great necessity of such exertions is becoming more and more apparent. View our boasted metropolis, London. Its spiritual and moral state is awfully deplorable, and yet very inadequately felt even by Christians. The total population of all the parishes whose churches are situated in the circle within eight miles of St. Paul's, exceeds now two millions of people. For these two millions the number of sittings provided by the Established Church, by Congregationalists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Wesleyans, Calvinistic Methodists, Quakers, Socinians, Foreign churches, Jews, Papists, and all other classes, is under 520,000. If 400 new churches, each holding 1000 were built, there would not then be accommodation, including all existing places, for more than one half of the population. On every Sabbath-day there must necessarily be a million and a half of persons in the metropolis outside any place of worship whatever. But the case is really much worse; on the average not three-fourths of the sittings are occupied at any given service on the Lord's day, and the increase of churches does not overtake the increase of population.

Such is our metropolis! Compared with it, many of our missions are well off. Sierra Leone, New Zealand, and the South Sea Islands are far better provided with Christian teachers than the metropolis of the Christian world; as an induction of particulars would fully shew.

And in this state of things what is the income of this General District Visiting Society? What large sums are poured into its treasury. We see what testimonies it has

* The District Visitor's Manual, with a Preface by the Rev. T. Dale, contains much useful information for Visitors, and for all Christians; and my friend the Rev. W. Jowett's four volumes of "The Christian Visitor," furnish much Scriptural aid to assist the friends of the sick and the afflicted.

had. What is its income ? What thousands does it raise a year. I am ashamed to speak its amount ! £250 a year ! ! The taxes on dogs yield £156,200 a year ; the taxes on tobacco and snuff, £3,561,812 a year ; taxes on spirits, £8,267,639 ; and for helping the church to visit the poor, the society is in debt, and its income is £250 a year ! Professing Christians are refusing themselves to come to Christ, and they give nothing to help others to hear him. No wonder the master of the house is "angry." No wonder he bids his servants "go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city." We bring before you, my brethren, this solemn, awakening, and quickening direction. Are you a servant of Christ ?—go then and fulfil his commission, make no delay.

With such a crippled, limited income, what can be done by this truly scriptural and Church of England Society ! How can there be an effective correspondence with clergymen through our country, setting the work of the society before them ! How can there be a large and free circulation of its publications and its claims ! How can there be the rousing of all parts of the land to this duty by personal intercourse. The society is cramped and fettered in every movement by its inadequate funds. It is wonderful, truly wonderful, how much has been done by its trivial means ; but let the faith and love of the church grow and increase, and thousands and ten thousands now in ignorance and sin shall bless God for its exertions. There wants a new spirit of zeal and love to go forth through our parishes from this society. Every parish in the kingdom would be the better for a District Visiting Society under its appointed pastor.

My brethren in the ministry, let us nourish our District Visiting Societies, if we have formed them, by meeting the visitors, and looking over their reports, and encouraging their labours. And if we are without such a right hand to our ministry, let us make no delay in forming such an efficient instrument for the good of our people ; which blesses the visitors as well as the people, and fur-

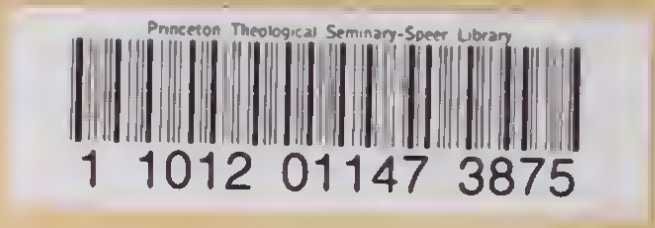
nishes appointed means of growth in grace to the one, and of awakening and instruction to the other.

My brethren who are visitors, God Almighty prosper your labours, and "multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness." Go on in your constant visits to the poor, and showing first kind attention to their earthly circumstances, then lead them to their true spiritual condition, and to their highest, and ever-present, and unfailing friend and Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, and the large provision which he has made in the gospel for all their wants. No labour of love, no visit to them, nor any word spoken for the Saviour, shall be without a blessing. There may be perhaps with advantage a time of suspended visits as well as of more active exertion. Our Saviour had times of seclusion, as well as times of active and laborious diligence in going about doing good. But never abandon or give up altogether your blessed office ; in due season you will reap if you faint not.

My brethren and sisters in general, have a full part and share in this work while the opportunity yet is afforded. "As we have opportunity,"—how weighty the word,—"let us do good to all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith." The time is short; the days are evil, and are likely to be more so till the Saviour returns in his glory. But he is at hand and comes quickly. O let us now fulfil his directions, and with our prayers and our contributions, and our personal efforts, "go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind."

THE END.

T. SEELEY, PRINTER.


Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01147 3875